القصيدة الهمزية

The Hamziyyah of Imam al-Būṣīrī

An Ode in Praise of the Best of Creation ﷺ

◆

FOREWORD
Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi

TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION
HAMZA YUSUF

The *Hamziyyah* of Imam al-Būṣīrī

"After the Qur'an and the prophetic sayings, the highest level of eloquence to which any Arab can aspire is realized in Arabic poetry. Thus, poets in subsequent generations invariably expressed their love for the Prophet ﷺ in marvels of verse that poured forth from their tongues and pens like pearls unbound.... Having spent over fifty-five years of my life immersed in the poetry of Imam al-Būṣīrī, listening to the *Burdah* and the *Hamziyyah* sung in weekly gatherings, and having penned two poetic expansions of each myself, I can say that Shaykh Hamza's translation deserves both praise and celebration."

Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi, from the Foreword

"Imam al-Būṣīrī deployed the power of poetry to convey his burning love of God and the final Messenger ﷺ in hopes of igniting flames of a similar love in the hearts of his readers. Today, many centuries later, we find ourselves in desperate need of such deep sentiment. May this poem help us to become the beneficiaries and the inheritors of that sublime love of the Beloved of God, Muhammad ﷺ."

Hamza Yusuf, from the Translator's Preface

"Piety toward the Prophet Muhammad and celebration of his life as exemplary are central to over 1,400 years of Muslim spirituality, but with the exception of Annemarie Schimmel, few scholars of Islam in the West have focused on this durable phenomenon. Hamza Yusuf's accessible and insightful translation of a praise poem by a celebrated poet and mystic adds a key work to our literature in English on Muslim spirituality."

Juan Cole, Richard P. Mitchell Collegiate Professor of History, University of Michigan

"This very attractive volume captures an exciting nexus of collaborations. The *Hamziyyah* connects a contemporary translator and his Arabic text, connects that translator to his scholarly predecessors in chains of pious transmission, connects the translator-as-English-poet to his translator into Arabic, and most importantly connects—with the aesthetic and affective ties that bind—communities across the ages who have loved al-Būṣīrī's poem."

Alexander Key, Associate Professor of Arabic and Comparative Literature, Stanford University

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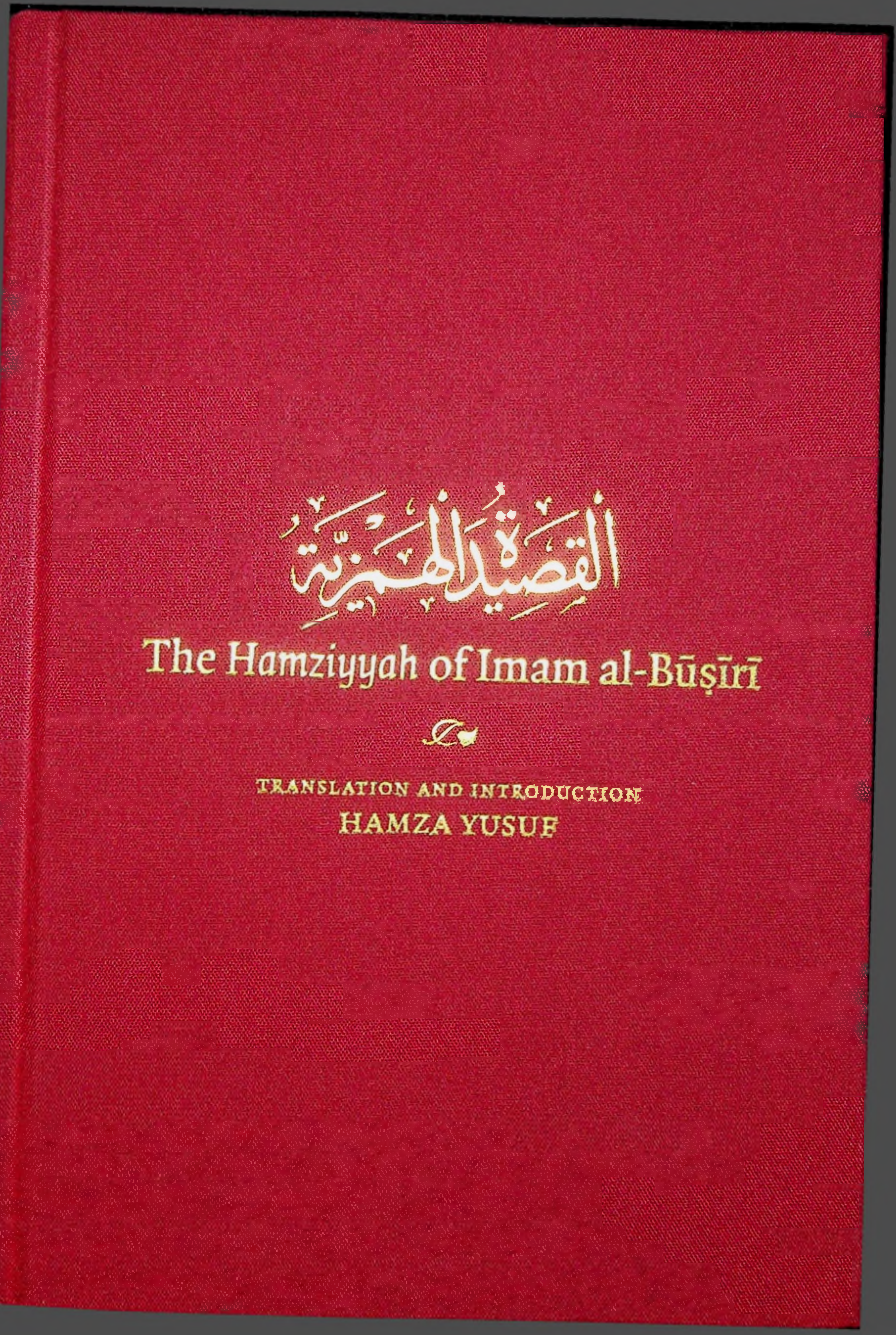

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TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION

HAMZA YUSUF

أم القرى في مدح خير الورى ﷺ

القصيدة الهمزية

للإمام الشيخ أبي عبد الله محمد بن سعيد البوصيري رضي الله عنه

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SANDALA

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بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE

* * *

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ وَمَلَٰٓئِكَتَهُۥ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى ٱلنَّبِيِّ
يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ صَلُّوا۟ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا۟ تَسْلِيمًا

"God and God's angels bless the Prophet:
O believers, invoke blessings on him, and
greet him with a prayer for peace."

QUR'AN 33:56

* * *

وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَٰلَمِينَ

"We have sent you only as a mercy to all peoples."

QUR'AN 21:107

* * *

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

"And surely, you are upon a magnificent ethos."

QUR'AN 68:4

* * *

❦

I attempt to praise the Chosen One yet want
Of gifts to reach such heights restrains my want

Who am I to plumb the ocean, and the ocean's vast
Who am I to count the stones and stars; alas

If all my limbs were tongues with gifts to tell
They'd ne'er reveal the glories in him that dwell

If all the world as one could praise him thus
Even then, in full they'd ne'er fulfill that trust

Esteem and courtesy have left me dry
From awe and deep respect, I've ceased to try

Sometimes with silence one says what can't be said
Other times one's words were better left unsaid

Translated by Hamza Yusuf

❦

* * *

أَرُومُ ٱمْتِدَاحَ ٱلْمُصْطَفَىٰ فَيَرُدُّنِى   قُصُورِى عَنْ إِدْرَاكِ تِلْكَ ٱلْمَنَاقِبِ
وَمَنْ لِى بِحَصْرِ ٱلْبَحْرِ وَٱلْبَحْرُ زَاخِرٌ   وَمَنْ لِى بِإِحْصَاءِ ٱلْحَصَىٰ وَٱلْكَوَاكِبِ
وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَعْضَائِى غَدَتْ أَلْسُنًا إِذًا   لَمَا بَلَغَتْ فِى ٱلْمَدْحِ بَعْضَ مَآرِبِى
وَلَوْ أَنَّ كُلَّ ٱلْعَالَمِينَ تَأَلَّفُوا   عَلَىٰ مَدْحِهِ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا بَعْضَ وَاجِبِ
فَأَمْسَكْتُ عَنْهُ هَيْبَةً وَتَأَدُّبًا   وَعَجْزًا وَإِعْظَامًا لِأَرْفَعِ جَانِبِ
وَرُبَّ سُكُوتٍ كَانَ فِيهِ بَلَاغَةٌ   وَرُبَّ كَلَامٍ فِيهِ عَتْبٌ لِعَاتِبِ

A poem in praise of the Prophet ﷺ by Imam Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbī (d. 1340)

* * *

DEDICATION

For the Best of Creation, Muhammad,
God's final Emissary ﷺ.

إلى روح الشريفة سُكَيْنة آل غالب رحمها الله تعالى.

This translation is dedicated to Shaykh Talal Zahid and Sayyida Nadia Zuhair. May God reward them for the blessing they have been to me and my work in particular. They exemplify many of the qualities of our Prophet ﷺ that attracted me to Islam in the first place.

Three of the narrators of the *Hamziyyah* in the isnad granted to me hail from Palestine. May the peace of Islam and its Prophet ﷺ that enabled the three religions to live together for centuries be restored to the land of Palestine and its peoples.

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Foreword

Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi

ALL PRAISE IS DUE TO ALLAH alone for bounties innumerable, the best of which is sending us the greatest mercy, Allah's beloved, our master Muhammad, the seal of the prophets and the final Messenger ﷺ. It is thus our duty not only to believe in the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, obey him, and follow in his footsteps, but also to revere him and to continuously celebrate him in our prayers. We must also openly proclaim his praises so that the world may hear his message and learn of his immaculate character, incomparable qualities, matchless miracles, and wise teachings. Therefore, praising the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is itself an act of worship that deepens our faith and draws us closer to our Lord, given that the Prophet ﷺ serves as our only doorway to the Divine.

It is no wonder that both poets and prose writers, from the earliest times, have vied with one another in praising him—although in doing so, it was the poets who preceded by far all the others. Among those poets who proffered gems of praise during the Prophet's life, none were more prominent than Ḥassān b. Thābit and Ka'b b. Zuhayr. History records Ḥassān's poetry in defense of the Prophet ﷺ. His eloquence earned him the office of the Prophet's orator to delegations, and the Prophet ﷺ even had a special pulpit built for him from which he recited his verses. Moreover, the famous poem by Ka'b b. Zuhayr, known simply by its opening two words, "*Bānat Su'ād*" (Su'ād has departed), became a model for later praise poets to emulate. When Ka'b b. Zuhayr stood before the Prophet ﷺ and recited his famous line, "The Messenger is indeed a brilliant light that illuminates," the Prophet ﷺ rewarded him by draping his own cloak (*burdah*) upon Ka'b's shoulders.

After the Qur'an and the prophetic sayings, the highest level of eloquence to which any Arab can aspire is realized in Arabic poetry. Thus, poets in subsequent generations invariably expressed their love for the Prophet ﷺ in marvels of verse that poured forth from their tongues and pens like pearls unbound. Among these, Imam al-Būṣīrī stands out as the most renowned. While his poetic output was copious, his two most prized poems are the *Burdah* and the *Hamziyyah*. Twenty years ago, Shaykh Hamza Yusuf rendered the *Burdah* into English, and he has now translated the *Hamziyyah*, offering English speakers access to the two most celebrated masterpieces of Arabic poetry in praise of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Translating the *Hamziyyah* presents not only a daunting task due to its length—it is three times that of the *Burdah*—but also a formidable challenge due to its linguistic complexity, which places it among the most rarefied expressions of Arabic eloquence. In stunning stanzas, the poem masterfully captures the beauty and perfection of the Prophet ﷺ, his character, his virtues, his miracles, and salient events in his unparalleled and momentous life.

While Imam al-Būṣīrī's erudite scholarship and poetic prowess qualified him to write great poetry, these qualities alone could not enable him to produce such gems: the additional element needed for his crowning achievements was his immense love for the Prophet ﷺ that acted as alchemy, transforming his verses into stunning jewels emanating from his heart. Indeed, when reading certain lines, one can almost taste the salt of the poet's tears falling upon the paper as they were written.

In much the same way, to properly translate such a sublime poem requires one to have, in addition to a knowledge and mastery of both languages, a deep affection and reverence for the Prophet ﷺ, so as to faithfully convey not only the meaning but also the sentiment with which the poet infused his words. It is here that Shaykh Hamza Yusuf rises to the task, adorning the *Hamziyyah* with the appropriate ornaments of the English language. His knowledge, which surpasses many Arab scholars beyond his years, is surpassed only by his unwavering love for the beloved of Allah ﷺ and for his family. Having spent over fifty-five years of my life immersed in the poetry of Imam al-Būṣīrī, listening to the *Burdah* and the *Hamziyyah* sung in weekly gatherings, and having penned two poetic expansions of each myself, I can say that Shaykh Hamza's translation deserves both praise and celebration.

Last but not least, in the Muslim tradition, we honor what is known as isnad—continuous chains of transmission that anchor all of Islam's sacred sciences and disciplines in every generation, including our own. When we come to study a particular work of a poet or scholar, we do not simply pick up his book from the shelf and read it; instead, we seek out a scholar who has studied the text through an unbroken chain of transmission connecting him with the original author to ensure the author's intents are correctly understood. When Imam al-Būṣīrī penned this poem, some of the greatest scholars of his time heard it directly from him and then transmitted it to their own students. This living tradition has continued uninterrupted from one generation to the next, up to and including the present day.

Isnad and Ijāzah

THE ISNAD TRADITION developed during the first century of Islam as a mechanism to preserve the veracity of reports. It essentially details the chain of narrators and their qualities, integrity, and sources.

The *ijāzah* system enables scholars to transmit books with something akin to the original intent of the author. This ensures the "life of the author" in a work of meaning, rather than the "death of the author," once the book leaves the author's hands, as it ensures the meaning of the text will be passed on to the next generation accurately. Such a living tradition makes possible the study of premodern works with a reliable assessment of what the authors actually meant.

The extensive commentaries, glosses, and marginalia tradition that arose early on provided assurance for the student that the text was indeed comprehensible. Moreover, the ijāzah system allowed for a quality assurance within Muslim scholarship as the texts were taught. Laying out the isnad was of immense value in preserving the integrity of books in an age before printing, when the distortion of such works would have otherwise been widespread.

In following the traditions of isnad and ijāzah, the translator presents in what follows three ijāzahs given to him by two luminaries of the Islamic tradition: two ijāzahs from Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi, and one from Shaykh Ibrāhīm Āl Khalīfah; both scholars are descendants of the Prophet ﷺ through his grandson al-Ḥasan ؓ.

الإجازة بالقصيدة الهمزيَّة

الحمد لله الذي فضَّل نبيَّه سيِّدنا محمَّدًا عليه الصلاة والسلام على جميع الأنبياء ورفع ذكره فوق كلِّ مخلوق من أهل الأرض والسماء. فهو البشير النذير، السراج المنير، الرؤوف الرحيم، ذو الخلق العظيم. فنحمد الله سبحانه أن أدرجنا في أمَّته، وشرَّفنا بسنَّته، وجعلنا من أهل محبَّته. اللَّهُمَّ فصلِّ منك عليه أفضل صلاة، وأبلغه منَّا أزكى سلام، ما قامت الألف بين يدي اسم الله، وبُسطت الباء في مبدأ بِسم الله، وما ختمت قصائد مدحه الشهيرةُ بالألف والهمزة، وعلى أصحابه ذوي الإباء والعزَّة، وعلى آله خصوصًا عمَّيه العبَّاس والحمزة.

أمَّا بعد، فقد رغب إليَّ العالم العامل، المهذَّب الكامل، الداعية الخطيب، الأديب الأريب: الشيخ حمزة يوسف هاذسون في أن أجيزه برواية القصيدة الهمزيَّة لإمام الشعراء، وسيِّد البلغاء، مبدع المعاني، ومجيد المباني، حسَّانِ الزمان الثاني: شرف الدين محمَّد بن سعيد البوصيريِّ رحمه الله تعالى ورضي عنه، وذلك بعد أن نقلها إلى اللغة الإنجليزيَّة، بلغة رائقة أدبيَّة، فجلَاها بأبدع حُلاها، وجال في مغانيها، مفترعًا أجملَ معانيها، فلانت على لسانه متونُها وهي عضباء، وتفجَّرت في بيانه عيونها بسلسال الماء، فأبدى مخدَّراتها للعيان، وفكَّ من مبانيها كلَّ عانٍ، بأسلوب كالعذب الزُّلال، أو السحر الحلال، أفرغ فيه فكره ولبَّه، وبثَّ فيه شوقه وحبَّه. فجزاه الله على ما ترجم، وأبان من كلِّ معنًى معجم.

وقدأجزته برواية هذه القصيدة العصماء للطالبين، وكشف مخدَّرات تلك الكاعب الحسناء للخاطبين، وذلك بروايتي لها عن والدي **العلَّامة المحقِّق الشيخ إبراهيم اليعقوبيِّ** (1343–1406) عن عمِّه **الشيخ محمَّد الشريف اليعقوبيِّ** (1282–1362) عن **الشيخ بكريِّ بن حامد العطَّار** (1253–1320) عن **عبد الرحمن بن محمَّد الكزبريِّ** (1184–1262) عن **زين الدين مصطفى بن محمَّد الأيُّوبيِّ** الشهير **بالرحمتيِّ** (1135–1205) عن **العارف الشيخ عبد الغنيِّ بن إسماعيل النابلسيِّ** (1050–1143) عن **نقيب الأشراف بدمشق السيِّد محمَّد بن**

كمال الدين ابن حمزة الدمشقيّ (1024–1085) ومفتي الحنابلة بدمشق الإمام تقيّ الدين عبد الباقي بن عبد الباقي البعليّ الحنبليّ الدمشقيّ (1005–1071) كلاهما عن شهاب الدين أحمد بن محمَّد العرعانيّ البقاعيّ (928–1045) عن شهاب الدين أحمد بن محمَّد ابن حجر الهيتميّ المكّيّ (909–974)، وهو قال في مقدمة كتابه (المنح المكّيَّة في شرح الهمزيَّة): "وقد حصلت لي رواية هذه القصيدة وغيرها من شعر الناظم من طرق متعدِّدة، منها بل أعلاها: أنّي أرويها عن شيخنا شيخ الإسلام، خاتمة الحفَّاظ والمتأخِّرين، أبي يحي زكريَّا الأنصاريّ الشافعيّ، عن العزّ أبي محمَّد ابن الفرات، عن العزّ أبي عمر ابن البدر ابن جماعة عن ناظمها، وعن حافظ العصر ابن حجر، عن الإمام المجتهد السراج البُلقينيّ والسراج ابن المُلَقِّن والحافظ زين الدين العراقيّ، عن العزّ ابن جماعة رحمهم الله تعالى، عن الناظم.

وأرويها أيضًا عن مشايخنا، عن الحافظ السيوطيّ، عن جماعة منهم الشُّمُنّيّ، بعضهم قراءة وبعضهم إجازة، عن عبد الله بن عليّ الحنبليّ كذلك، عن العزّ ابن جماعة عن الناظم". وأوصي المجاز حفظه الله تعالى ونفع به أن لا ينساني من دعواته في خلواته وجلواته، وصلَّى الله على سيِّدنا محمَّد وآله وصحبه وسلَّم تسليمًا كثيرًا إلى يوم الدين.

قاله بفمه، ونضده بيده بدل قلمه، أفقر الورى إلى رحمة ربِّه الغنيّ: **محمَّد أبو الهدى اليعقوبيُّ الحسنيُّ** كان الله له ولمن دعا له ليلة الاثنين لإحدى عشرة ليلة بقين من شهر شعبان المعظَّم سنة ألف وأربعمائة وستٍّ وأربعين، من الهجرة النبويَّة، في المدينة المنوَّرة على ساكنها أفضل الصلاة وأزكى السلام.

محمَّد أبو الهدى اليعقوبيُّ

Isnad and *Ijāzah* by Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi

After praising Allah and sending the most excellent of prayers upon His Messenger ﷺ, I hereby issue an *ijāzah* to Shaykh Hamza Yusuf to narrate the *Hamziyyah* poem by Imam al-Būṣīrī and to narrate all of the imam's works, thereby connecting him to the poet through my chains of isnad, of which I present here the following:

I received the poem *al-Hamziyyah, Umm al-Qurā fī madḥ Khayr al-Warā*,
from my father, the erudite master Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Ya'qūbī al-Ḥasanī (1343–1406),
who received it from his paternal uncle, the erudite scholar Muḥammad al-Sharīf al-Ya'qūbī (1282–1362);
from Shaykh Bakrī b. Ḥāmid al-'Aṭṭār (1253–1320);
from the hadith master of Damascus, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad al-Kuzbarī (1184–1262);
from Zayn al-Dīn Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad al-Ayyūbī al-Raḥmatī (1135–1205);
from the famous gnostic 'Abd al-Ghanī b. Ismā'īl al-Nābulusī (1050–1143);
from Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (977–1061);
from his father Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (904–984);
from Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī (831–922);
from 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. al-Furāt (759–851);
from 'Izz al-Dīn 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Muḥammad b. Jamā'ah al-Kinānī (694–767);
from its composer Imam Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Sa'īd al-Būṣīrī (608–696).[1]

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[1] This chain of narrators is known in the tradition as a high chain (*sanad 'ālī*): in other words, the fewer the narrators, the higher the chain. Scholars often gave chains to their students' children or children of other scholars with either an unveiling in which they realized they would themselves be scholars one day or with the hopes they would become scholars. Hence, in this chain are three narrators who received the chain as children, but they eventually became scholars in their own right and thus transmitted the text directly from the preceding scholar, omitting their fathers.

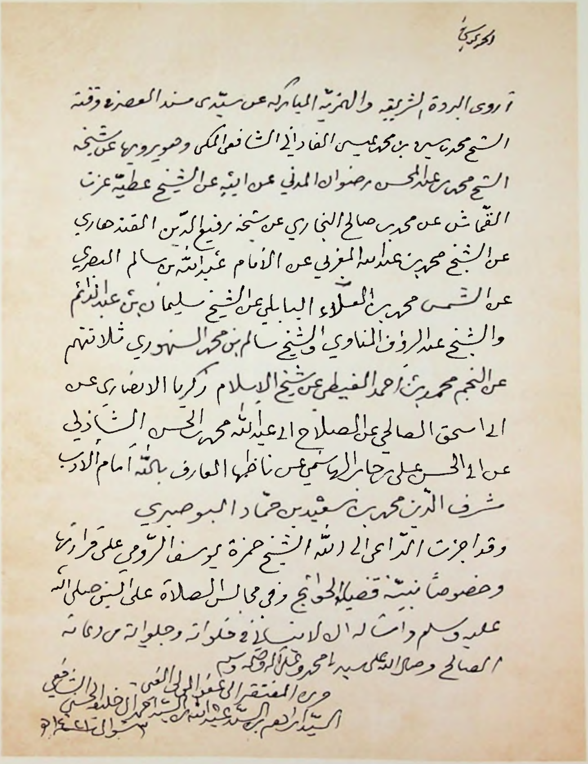
I pray that Allah, the Most Generous, rewards the poet and the translator, and that Allah allows this translation to spread to every place that Islam has reached, and that He allows people to benefit from it by increasing their love and attachment to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, may the most fragrant of prayers and the most finely perfumed salutations reach him.

Rabat, 6 Rabi al-Awwal 1446
Servant of the Sacred Knowledge
Muhammad al-Yaqoubi

Isnad and *Ijāzah* by Sayyid Ibrāhīm Āl Khalīfah

The most learned scholar and *muḥaddith* (transmitter of hadith) Sayyid Ibrāhīm b. Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh b. Sayyid Aḥmad Āl Khalīfah al-Ḥasanī al-Shāfiʿī ؒ (d. 2021) granted the author the following isnad and *ijāzah* of the *Hamziyyah* on 3 Shawwal 1421 AH (December 29, 2000).

> I narrate the blessed *Burdah* and the blessed *Hamziyyah* from my master, the *musnid* of the age during his time, Shaykh Muḥammad Yāsīn b. Muḥammad ʿĪsā al-Fādānī al-Shāfiʿī al-Makkī, and he narrates from his teacher Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin Riḍwān al-Madanī; from his father; from Shaykh ʿAṭiyyah ʿIzzat al-Qammāsh; from Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Bukhārī; from his teacher Rafīʿ al-Dīn al-Qandahārī; from Shaykh Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Maghribī; from Imam ʿAbd Allāh b. Sālim al-Baṣrī; from al-Shams Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlāʾ al-Bābilī; from Shaykh Sulaymān b. ʿAbd al-Dāʾim and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Manāwī and Shaykh Sālim b. Muḥammad al-Sanhūrī (all three of them); from al-Najm Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ghīṭī; from Shaykh al-Islām Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī; from Abū Isḥāq al-Ṣāliḥī; from al-Ṣalāḥ Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī; from Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Jābir al-Hāshimī; from the composer of the poem, the gnostic and imam of literature Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Ḥammād al-Būṣīrī. I grant the professor of faith Shaykh Hamza Yusuf the authorization to recite the poem, especially with the intention of having needs fulfilled [by God] and to recite the poem in the sittings in which prayers on the Prophet ﷺ are invoked. I ask him [Shaykh Hamza Yusuf] not to forget me in his righteous prayers when alone and when not alone. May God invoke His prayers and salutations on our master Muhammad ﷺ and his family and companions.
>
> Authored by the one in need of pardon from his Lord who is Self-Sufficient, Sayyid Ibrāhīm b. Sayyid ʿAbd Allāh b. Sayyid Aḥmad Āl Khalīfah al-Ḥasanī al-Shāfiʿī, on 3 Shawwal 1421 AH.



الحمد لله

أروي البردة الشريفة والهمزية المباركة عن سيدي مسند العصر وفقيه
الشيخ محمد ياسين بن محمد عيسى الفاداني الشافعي المكي وهو يرويها عن شيخه
الشيخ محمد بن عبد المحسن رضوان المدني عن أبيه عن الشيخ عطية عزت
القماش عن محمد بن صالح البخاري عن شيخه رفيع الدين القندهاري
عن الشيخ محمد بن عبد الله المغربي عن الإمام عبد الله بن سالم البصري
عن الشمس محمد بن العلاء البابلي عن الشيخ سليمان بن عبد الدائم
والشيخ عبد الرؤوف المناوي والشيخ سالم بن محمد السنهوري ثلاثتهم
عن النجم محمد بن أحمد الغيطي عن شيخ الإسلام زكريا الأنصاري عن
أبي إسحق الصالحي عن الصلاح أبي عبد الله محمد بن الحسن الشاذلي
عن أبي الحسن علي بن جابر الهاشمي عن ناظمها العارف بالله إمام الأدب
شرف الدين محمد بن سعيد بن حماد البوصيري
وقد أجزت الداعي إلى الله الشيخ حمزة يوسف الرومي على قراءتها
وخصوصاً بنية قضاء الحوائج وفي مجالس الصلاة على النبي صلى الله
عليه وسلم وأسأله أن لا ينساني في خلواته وجلواته من دعائه
الصالح وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم
حرره المفتقر إلى عفو المولى الغني الشافعي
السيد ابراهيم بن السيد عبد الله بن السيد أحمد آل خليفة الحسيني
شوال ١٤٢٠هـ

Translator's Preface

Hamza Yusuf

THROUGHOUT THE AGES, POETRY HAS held a unique place in all cultures due to its power to move the human heart. In premodern times, when beautiful art and architecture adorned most villages and cities, poetry and ornamented language regularly graced conversation in courtly and educated circles, and even the less educated spiced their language with colorful and poetic colloquialisms. People in traditional societies often enjoyed—and some still do—a fine turn of phrase, a witty riposte, or verses from a famous poem sprinkled into everyday conversation. They relished and revered an eloquent eulogy or a powerful speech pulsing with the kind of language that could rouse a nation and summon "the better angels of our nature."

Today, however, like our postmodern buildings devoid of ornamentation, our everyday speech has become so plain as to neither inspire nor delight. When we strip language of its beauty, and of the joy that beauty evokes, for a utilitarian usage that "gets straight to the point," we lose the power language possesses to move us. Those lacking any feel for lofty language are reduced to using profanities and crude idioms in a vain attempt to "spice up" banal comments or conversations.

Historian Arnold Toynbee (d. 1975) thought widespread vulgarity to be a hallmark of a society in the throes of death. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ predicted that foul language, both spontaneous and affected, would become ubiquitous in the latter days. Writing to an Italian grammarian, John Milton, the eminent seventeenth-century English poet, recognized that the degradation of language portends a state's downfall:

> It is Plato's opinion that an alteration in the style and fashion of dress portends grave disorders and changes in the State; I would maintain rather that when the language falls into corruption and decay, the downfall of the State and a period of degradation and obscurity are at hand. For is not the use of words which are illiterate and mean, incorrect in form, or wrongly pronounced, a very clear indication of a slothful and sluggish disposition among the people, and a proneness to submit to any form of slavery? On the other hand, we have never heard of an empire or a country which did not enjoy at least moderate prosperity as long as its people continued to cultivate and take a proper pride in their language.

Despite the impoverished state of language in our time, many people still love poetry and derive great pleasure in reading, reciting, or listening to it. Great poets possess a remarkable ability to distill language into forms that mysteriously evoke our inherent sense of beauty and resonate in our hearts. This holds true for most languages. For instance, in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, and Hausa, Muslim poets have for centuries crafted poems infused with wisdom and often studded with gems of metaphysical insight. European poets have also produced some of humanity's enduring literary works, such as the plays and poems of Shakespeare, which are treasured worldwide, even in translation.

Great poetry illuminates and inspires: "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so." Such powerful and emphatic poetic phrasing commands our attention and, once heard or read, is almost impossible to forget. Although the compelling prose and poetry of the likes of Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton may have fallen out of favor in our times, plenty of Westerners continue to read the great masters of the past, and their books still populate bookstores everywhere. And recently, some premodern poets of the East, such as Rumi and Hafez, have transcended borders to take a place among the most-read poets in the West, much the way Omar Khayyam did in the nineteenth century.

In Eastern lands, multitudes of Muslims still revel in their people's poetic legacy. The lyrics of most of their traditional music still derive from classical poetry. Educated Arabs often learn copious amounts of verse by heart and add literary flair to their conversations by reciting illuminating lines from the likes of Mutanabbī (d. 965). (Mutanabbī is sometimes called "the Arabian Shakespeare," although since Mutanabbī lived centuries earlier, many Arabs prefer to call Shakespeare "the English Mutanabbī.") As for literate Persians, they recite from memory countless lines of poetry by Sa‘dī, Hafez, Ferdowsī, and Shabestarī—poets who are as familiar to them as Shakespeare, Byron, Frost, and Dickinson are to educated English and American readers. Similarly, Urdu speakers of South Asia recite the works of Moghul or modern poets like Mirza Ghalib and Muhammad Iqbal to listeners who undulate their heads with delight and call out, "*Mukarrar!*" ("Encore!"). Traditional Muslim poets often conveyed metaphysical truths of the Islamic faith by way of lyrical song (*inshād*), didactic poems (*mutūn al-rajaz*), and poetic works of moral edification similar to Alexander Pope's use of poetry as a vehicle to convey moral truths in his *An Essay on Man*.

Poetry pervaded the pre-Islamic period known as the Jahiliya (the age of ignorance or zealotry), and the praise poem (*madḥ*), often commissioned by rulers, was among the most popular of the poetic genres. An exemplary poet of that era was Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā (d. 609). Legend has it that his most famous ode, along with that of six other great poets of the Jahiliya, hung suspended in honor from the ceiling of the Holy Shrine of Mecca—hence their epithet, "The Seven Hanging Odes." Zuhayr penned his famous praise poem to honor Harim b. Sinān (d. 608), the Arab ruler who ended the tragic forty-year war between the tribes of ‘Abs and Dhibyān, and years later, when Harim's son visited the second caliph, ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﵁ (d. 644), the caliph invited him to recite some of Zuhayr's lines praising his father. Upon hearing them, ‘Umar ﵁ remarked, "Zuhayr certainly did well by you in his poetry!" "And we certainly did well by him with our largesse!" Harim's son replied. "Yes," ‘Umar ﵁ retorted, "but your gifts are long gone, whereas his gift remains."

Praise poetry remained popular after most of the Arabian Peninsula adopted Islam as its faith; later poets such as Mutanabbī excelled in the genre and were often richly rewarded by rulers for immortalizing them in their paeans. And in fact, they often did immortalize them: for instance, Sayf al-Dawlah (d. 967), a successful Muslim ruler of tenth-century Aleppo, is known to this day not for his many official achievements but due to Mutanabbī's stunning odes in praise of him.

Many such praise poems, however, were insincere, uttered merely to curry favor or earn material reward. Islam birthed a new kind of praise poem, inspired not by a desire for worldly gains but by deep love, reverence, and devotion. These poems expressed love of God and the last Messenger ﷺ, and the poets who produced them sought only divine favor.

Of all the praise poems, none influenced Muslims and their cultures more than those expressing sincere love of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. And of all the poets who praised the Prophet ﷺ, none achieved more worldwide renown than Imam al-Būṣīrī (d. 1294), whose *Burdah* and *Hamziyyah* endure as two of the most recited poems in the Muslim world and are increasingly so today in the West among diaspora Muslims and converts. Countless commentaries over the centuries have explicated their linguistic subtleties and poetic virtuosity.

Of the two, the *Burdah* has proved far more popular than the *Hamziyyah*, enjoying an unprecedented stature among reciters, singers, and the Muslim masses. For some devotees of these praise poems, especially among scholars, however, the *Hamziyyah* holds a special place. Perhaps due to its far greater length and more complex diction and syntax, it does not share the same global acclaim as the *Burdah*. For the same reason, only certain sections of the *Hamziyyah* are recited in devotional gatherings, mostly in Muslim Africa and among scholars of the East. The Arabic musical rendition by the renowned Fes Singers that accompanies this publication, however, includes the entire *Hamziyyah*.

Both poems have acquired a place in some of the devotional practices of southern Morocco's Sous region: like the birds that congregate to tweet their songs of praise at the two ends of the day, students of sacred knowledge gather each day after the dawn and sunset prayers to recite litanies from the Qur'an; after the sunset litany, they recite a seventh of the *Burdah*, and after the dawn litany, a seventh of the *Hamziyyah*. For centuries, this devotional practice has enabled students to complete both a monthly recitation of the entire Qur'an and a weekly one of the two praise poems. They memorize the Qur'an, and eventually memorize these poems, not only to inculcate love of the Prophet ﷺ but also to enhance their linguistic capabilities, since both works exemplify the pinnacle of Arabic poetry.

I was aware of the *Hamziyyah* given its place in the devotional poetry of North and West African Islam, but I was far less familiar with it than with the more widespread *Burdah*. Indeed, in the introduction to my *Burdah* translation in 2001, I mentioned the *Hamziyyah* and the effect hearing lines from it had on me:

> I felt compelled to translate the *Burdah* after a trip to Mauritania, having realized it was everywhere, on everyone's tongue, always ready to alter the ambience, enhance the state, and bring the presence of the Beloved into the gathering. Once, sitting with one of my teachers, Abdullah Ould Ahmadna, I heard for the first time a line from Imam al-Būṣīrī's other great poem, the *Hamziyyah*: "If God places a people in the service of the blissful, then they too become blissful." Those words penetrated my heart because they emanated from the poet's heart, and "what comes from one's heart pierces another's." That is the quintessence of poetry—penetrating human insight that a real poet conveys through words powerful enough to reach another's heart, enabling the listener to realize the same insight.

While completing my translation of the *Burdah*, I had hoped to translate the *Hamziyyah*, but the duties of life do not always allow us the time to fulfill our aspirations. Perhaps as hindering a factor as time was the difficulty of the task: translating an epic poem in praise of the Prophet ﷺ is not an endeavor to approach with haste. Hence, translating the *Hamziyyah* remained an ambition waiting for an opportune time. That time arrived in 2018, when Khalid Hussain, a British publisher, asked me to rework a nascent translation of the *Hamziyyah*. After perusing it, I felt I needed to start from scratch, and that demanded a greater effort than I had envisioned and more time than I had anticipated.

For the past several years, I have chipped away at this project while overseeing Zaytuna College and attending to many other commitments. By the grace of God, in the blessed month of Ramadan 1445, I was able to complete the translation. Due to my own limitations as a poet, as well as the constraints of the English language in relation to Arabic, my translation cannot convey the stunning sublimity of the original Arabic with its luminous schemes and tropes, as well as the richness of its diction. Nonetheless, I hope this effort grants a glimmer of the beauty of the original as well as the spirit of the sublime love that Imam al-Būṣīrī expresses for the Prophet ﷺ.

Indeed, the poet's love pulsates from every page of the *Hamziyyah*. Contemporary Syrian-Kurdish scholar, and my teacher and friend, Shaykh Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī (d. 2013), wrote in his introduction to a critical edition of the poem, "If you compare the *Hamziyyah* to other panegyrics in praise of rulers and notables, usually done in hopes of some worldly gain, you will find yourself amidst a fiery blaze of passion, burning brightly, and you will sense the fire's flames penetrate your emotions, setting them ablaze." These words recalled lines from a contemporary songwriter and poet about another thirteenth-century poem:

> Then she opened up a book of poems and handed it to me
> Written by an Italian poet from the thirteenth century
> And every one of those words rang true
> And glowed like burning coal
> Pouring off of every page
> As if it was written in my soul from me to you.

Reflecting on such contemporary responses to words from centuries ago, it struck me as wondrous how poetic expressions of deep and genuine sentiments can dwarf distances of time, space, cultures, and creeds to penetrate directly into a reader's or listener's heart. On several occasions while translating the *Hamziyyah*, the impact of the poem's power reduced me to tears.

In taking us on an enlightening journey through the Beloved's life and times, the poet's alluring use of assonance, alliteration, and other poetic devices astounds the reader while never spilling over into the poetic equivalent of "purple prose." In extolling the Prophet's sagacious guidance, exemplary character, and countless sacrifices for his community, the poet finds healing for the pain and regret of a life he perceives was wasted in unworthy activities, to the detriment of his soul's journey to the divine. Notwithstanding his own sense of personal failure, we now can see Imam al-Būṣīrī as a man who toiled worthily in the poet's vineyard and left us the fruits of his labor of love—a work that reminds us how language expressing a sublime love of our Prophet ﷺ transcends worldly difficulties, helps us endure life's distractions, and infuses the tears of those in his celestial presence with a sweetness that soothes the bitter grief they feel at his terrestrial absence.

Imam al-Būṣīrī deployed the power of poetry to convey his burning love of God and the final Messenger ﷺ in hopes of igniting flames of a similar love in the hearts of his readers. Today, many centuries later, we find ourselves in desperate need of such deep sentiment. May this poem help us to become the beneficiaries and the inheritors of that sublime love of the Beloved of God, Muhammad ﷺ.

◆

Introduction

Hamza Yusuf

IMAM AL-BŪṢĪRĪ UNDOUBTEDLY RANKS AMONG the greatest poets in Muslim history, given his singular literary contributions and enduring influence; his contemporaries ranked him among the scholars of his time as well. Indeed, the epithet scholars bestowed upon him—*Sharaf al-Dīn* (Faith's Honor)—reflects his immense contribution to the religion of Islam. In the introduction to his commentary on the *Hamziyyah*, sixteenth-century Egyptian polymath Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566) describes Imam al-Būṣīrī as "the shaykh, the imam, the realized knower of God, the consummate aspirant, the polymath, the verifier, the erudite, the belletrist, the scholar of the poets, the most poetic among the scholars, the most eloquent among the orators, and the most erudite among the sages."

Muḥammad b. Sa'īd b. Ḥammād b. Muḥsin b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṣanhāj b. Hilāl b. al-Ṣanhājī al-Būṣīrī, widely known as Imam al-Būṣīrī, was born on March 22, 1212. Although some biographies say he was born in his mother's hometown of Dalāṣ, most place his birth in the southern Egyptian hamlet of Bahshīm, on the outskirts of Bahnasā. His family hailed from southern Morocco and belonged to the North African clan of Ṣanhājah, whose members still reside in parts of southern Morocco's Sous region, Western Sahara, western Algeria, and Mauritania, and are noted for their scholarship and piety.

Early in his life, Imam al-Būṣīrī's family moved to Cairo, where he memorized the Qur'an and received the standard Muslim education of the time, which included a study of grammar, logic, and rhetoric—the qualitative aspect of a liberal education, known in the West as the trivium. His schooling would have entailed large doses of literature and poetry, including the art and science of prosody. Imam al-Būṣīrī excelled especially in Arabic and became a master calligrapher, earning a living for a time as a scribe and an engraver of tombstones. He mastered *tajwīd*, the art of pronunciation and recitation of the Qur'an, and was noted as a melodious Qur'an reciter. He also studied prophetic biography and comparative religion, both of which inform the *Hamziyyah*.

Unfortunately, we know almost nothing about those he studied under, though we know he studied at the mosque college of Shaykh 'Abd al-Ẓāhir. However, we do know that Imam al-Būṣīrī was praised for his erudition by many scholars, including Egyptian polymath Imam al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505). And although he most likely did not hold a teaching position at any of the notable Egyptian colleges of his day, Imam al-Būṣīrī did take on students, his two most celebrated pupils being Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī (d. 1344), a well-known exegete of the Qur'an, and al-'Izz b. Jamā'ah (d. 1366), an eminent scholar of prophetic traditions. Imam al-Būṣīrī was also known for his many charitable acts, among which was establishing a Qur'an school for children.

As a young adult, Imam al-Būṣīrī held managerial posts in Egypt's state bureaucracy, in the town of Bilbeis, but, disillusioned by the want of character in many of his bureaucratic colleagues and prompted by his own integrity, he eventually resigned. Meanwhile, he wrote panegyrics for ministers as well as invectives that lampooned aspects of Egyptian society. People began to recognize him as a gifted poet and commissioned his services. This was not an unalloyed blessing, however: in times of want, poverty compelled him to compose poems in praise of unworthy notables, works he later came to regret.

As his devotional journey progressed, he set out for Alexandria to obtain spiritual guidance directly from the notable saint and spiritual master Abū al-'Abbās al-Mursī (d. 1287), a direct student of one of Islam's greatest spiritual masters, Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258). Imam al-Būṣīrī resided next to Abū al-'Abbās for the remainder of his life. Among his fellow students was his close companion Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Sakandarī (d. 1309), who penned the famous *Al-Ḥikam* (The aphorisms), one of the most universally cherished works of spiritual insight.

After the effects of a stroke partially paralyzed Imam al-Būṣīrī, he began work on his most famous praise poem, *Al-Kawākib al-durriyyah fī madḥ Khayr al-Bariyyah* (The celestial lights in praise of the Best of Creation), which would become known simply as the *Burdah*. As his work on it ended, he was visited in a vision by the Prophet ﷺ, who wrapped him in his mantle (*burdah*). Imam al-Būṣīrī awakened from this dream to find himself completely free of his paralysis.[1]

Little is known of Imam al-Būṣīrī's travels, but in the *Hamziyyah* he details beautifully his pilgrimage to Mecca and visit to Medina. Some scholars mention that he may also have spent time in Jerusalem before its negotiated surrender back to the Crusaders in 1229.

The *Hamziyyah* is informed by Imam al-Būṣīrī's personal experiences as well as the historical events he lived through in his turbulent times. In addition to his own personal hardships, such as poverty and illness, he also witnessed the trials afflicting his society at large, which included plagues, famines, and wars, not the least of which was the Crusaders' reconquest of the Holy Lands after their liberation from them a few decades earlier. God extended his life long enough for him to see the Crusaders vanquished and finally expelled from Palestine in 1291. Three years later, he departed this world a sincere penitent and true mystic, leaving behind timeless testimonies of his love and having earned his status as the peerless praise poet of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. He entitled his epic poem *Umm al-Qurā fī madḥ Khayr al-Warā* (The Mecca of praise of the Best of Creation),[2] as if to say, "My poem is now the Qiblah of every poet who aspires to praise the one to whom God alone does justice in praise." Imam al-Būṣīrī's mortal remains grace a tomb in Alexandria, Egypt, across the street from the tomb and mosque of his beloved master and spiritual guide, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī ؓ.

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[1] This experience recalls the famous incident of the earlier poet Kaʿb b. Zuhayr ؓ (d. 662), who had received the Prophet's mantle from the Prophet's own hands—in a waking state—for his praise poem, *Bānat Suʿād*.

[2] This is the full title of the *Hamziyyah*. The epithet *hamziyyah* refers to the rhyme scheme of the poem, each of whose 456 lines ends with the letter *hamzah*.

Elements and Themes of the Poem

Written sometime after the *Burdah*, and likely the last poem penned by Imam al-Būṣīrī, the *Hamziyyah* differs from its predecessor in form, in length, and in some of the topics addressed. These differences help explain why the *Burdah* is better known worldwide.

For one thing, the *Burdah*'s meter, known as *baḥr al-basīṭ*, enjoys a popularity among Arab poets, past and present, comparable to that of iambic pentameter in English poetry. In the *Hamziyyah*, on the other hand, the imam employs the less common *baḥr al-khafīf*.

The *Burdah* spawned a vast tradition of Andalusian poetry, the *badīʿiyyāt*. This new genre imitated the *Burdah* in employing the *basīṭ* meter and the *Burdah*'s rhyme scheme, which ends each line with the letter *mīm*. The *badīʿiyyāt* tradition was made famous by Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 1339), one of the greatest of the later Arab panegyrists. When Aḥmad Shawqī (d. 1932), the preeminent nineteenth-century poet of Egypt's literary renaissance (*al-nahḍah*), wrote his own *ʿAlā nahj al-Burdah* (By way of the *Burdah*), he too chose to employ the same meter and rhyme scheme as Imam al-Būṣīrī's *Burdah*. But when he wrote his much shorter *Hamziyyah* in imitation of Imam al-Būṣīrī's, he did not use the imam's chosen meter, *baḥr al-khafīf*, but instead the more common *al-kāmil* meter.

Besides its meter, the length of the *Hamziyyah* also limited its reach; at 456 lines, it is almost thrice the length of the *Burdah*. Unlike ancient Greece and Rome, and even England, Arabia does not have a tradition of epic poems but of qasida, which usually do not exceed two hundred lines. While the overall structure of the *Hamziyyah* does not strictly follow that of the pre-Islamic qasida, it does have many features in common with that tradition.

As for topics, the *Hamziyyah* also differs from the *Burdah* and covers a vast number, many of which focus on the Prophet's life, his historical period, and the miracles that attended him. Other matters the poet addresses include the wonders of the Qur'an, a vivid narrative of the medieval voyage from Cairo to Mecca and Medina, a pointed critique of the erroneous beliefs and actions of adherents of Judaism and Christianity, and a final introspective look at the poet's own past deeds and misdeeds and a plea for the Prophet's intercession and God's forgiveness.

Unlike the *Burdah*, which opens referring to the Prophet ﷺ in the third person, the *Hamziyyah* begins with the poet addressing the Prophet ﷺ directly. Mystics and lovers understand that speaking directly to the Prophet ﷺ reveals the speaker's immediate sense of his presence, an experience shared by many saints. In describing the Prophet's incomparable traits at the outset, the poet exults in the supernal nature of the Messenger of God ﷺ.

The poet then narrates a succession of miracles surrounding the Prophet's birth, some related to his wet nurse, Ḥalīmah al-Saʿdiyyah ﵂ (d. 630), and others to the splitting of his chest and purification of his heart by the angel Gabriel ﵇. Imam al-Būṣīrī goes on to relate Khadījah's (d. 619) role in the Prophet's mission, the signs prior to the Prophet's advent as a messenger, the animals and stones that bore witness to the Prophet's truth, and his sacred Night Journey and hegira.

Imam al-Būṣīrī then caustically confronts the Prophet's adversaries—those who viciously lampooned and mocked him and those who tried to assassinate him.[3] He also highlights the forgiveness shown by the Prophet ﷺ toward his enemies, elucidates his virtuous character, and emphasizes the many blessings God bestowed upon the Prophet ﷺ. The blessings include the Prophet's many miracles, and the poet also highlights the miraculous hands of the Prophet ﷺ, which wrought so many wonders, as well as his distinctive physical traits and qualities that distinguished him among men.

Next comes a potent section on the miracle of the Qur'an, its singular status as the final dispensation among all revelations, its unmatched linguistic beauty, its sciences, and its transformative power. Then, regarding the previous Abrahamic dispensations, the poet assails Jews and Christians through an acerbic display of the invective tradition (*hijā'*).

Returning to the Prophet's life, Imam al-Būṣīrī expounds on the exploits and victories of the Prophet ﷺ in battle; the poet also expresses his deep yearnings to visit the Prophet's birthplace and the other sacred sites of Mecca and Medina. This is followed by the stunning *raḥīl* section, common to Arabian qasida, which recounts Imam al-Būṣīrī's desert journey to the Hejaz on a she-camel, fraught with trials and dangers. He vividly catalogs the various landmarks—including resting and watering places—along the medieval pilgrim's route from southern Egypt to the Hejaz. He reveals the immense transformation and rejuvenation his pilgrimage brought him and then relates his bittersweet return to Egypt.

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[3] The polytheists and Judaists attempted to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ thirteen times during his lifetime.

In the last quarter of the poem, Imam al-Būṣīrī begins a communion with the Prophet ﷺ using his patronymic, Abū al-Qāsim. Much of this section comprises a series of oaths and includes the poet's seeking intercession through the Prophet's companions, beginning with Imam 'Alī (d. 661) and his two sons, Imams Ḥasan (d. 670) and Ḥusayn ؓ (d. 680). Here, the apparent Shia flavor may suggest to some the lingering influence of Fatimid Egypt, but, more likely, it reflects the Sunni poet's roots in Morocco, a place known for love of the Prophet ﷺ and his family since the time of Moulay Idrīs (d. 791), the great-grandson of the Prophet's grandson, who founded Morocco's first dynasty. Imam al-Būṣīrī then extols the virtues of the other three caliphs, Abū Bakr (d. 634), 'Umar, and 'Uthmān ؓ (d. 656), as well as the ten companions ؓ to whom the Prophet ﷺ promised paradise.

The poem then turns intensely intimate as Imam al-Būṣīrī, speaking directly to the Prophet ﷺ, seeks solace and intercession for himself and all other sinners. Baring his heart, he discloses his regrets: his wayward ways, wasted time, gluttony, procrastination, hard-heartedness, and other weaknesses that held him back from proximity to God. After this cathartic confession, he begins to extol, with apparent ironic relish, his own mastery of the genres and goals of poetry. These verses exemplify the boasting tradition (*fakhr*) of the great Arab poets. Not unlike noteworthy English-language poets such as Shakespeare, Imam al-Būṣīrī seemed to have a remarkable sense of his destined literary immortality.

He couples his boasting with laments about his wasted youth and how old age has crept up on him. This moves him toward despair, but he immediately turns to God:

> The wrongs I've wrought leave me weary;
> my days are grim and my nights gloomy.
>
> Then I recall the grace of God, and suddenly,
> such joy returns to my face wherever I turn.

In the original Arabic, the sublimity of these sentiments calls to mind Shakespeare's magisterial Sonnet 29, wherein the Bard also turns from a state of dreariness and despair to one of joy and hope:

> Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
> Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
> Like to the lark at break of day arising
> From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
>   For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
>   That then I scorn to change my state with kings'.

In the final section, Imam al-Būṣīrī boasts once more about the wonders of his verses and pleads that they be accepted. He acknowledges his inadequacy at praising the one whom God praised before him. Indeed, words could never encompass the Prophet's reality nor capture his light, and, as the poet writes, "among your miracles is our incapacity to describe you." Imam al-Būṣīrī concludes his poem thus:

> These eulogies I have offered in the presence of
> my petition because I possess no wealth to give—
>
> As long as God is adored and prayers are prayed,
> and all things, through their Lord, will subsist.

The Disconcerting Verses

Amid this masterful paean to the Prophet ﷺ, the reader encounters a section of sixty-six verses that unsettle one like heavy turbulence during a smooth plane ride. These verses take aim, with uncharacteristic severity, at Judaism and Christianity, deriding their adherents for certain beliefs rejected by Muslims as later interpolations into their original revelations.

Readers familiar with the Prophet's character may find it disorienting to discover such vitriolic verses, which appear at odds with prophetic teachings. The Prophet ﷺ was known as the living embodiment of the Qur'an, and these verses do not mirror well the Qur'anic guidance for engaging with people of other faiths—especially Jews and Christians, or "People of the Book." Many Qur'anic injunctions enjoin Muslims to speak graciously to Jews, Christians, and even pagans; to treat them with respect and kindness; to neither coerce nor compel them in any way;

and to be patient with all. A few pertinent Qur'anic verses include the following:

> Speak nicely to people (2:83). Do not contest the Jews and the Christians except in the most beautiful of ways (29:46). God has not forbidden you to be charitable and just to those who have not fought you over religion or driven you from your homes, for God loves the just (60:8). And you will surely hear much that is offensive from the Jews and the Christians and from idolaters. If you are patient and conscientious, that is part of the order of things (3:186). Are you then going to compel the people to become believers? (10:99). And do not grieve over them, and do not be depressed by whatever they connive; for God is with those who are conscientious and those who do good (16:127–28).

Indeed, the Qur'an recounts that God commanded the Prophet Moses ﵇ himself to "go to the Pharaoh... and speak gently to him that perhaps he might be guided" (20:43–44).

An ardent modern admirer of the poem, Syrian scholar Shaykh Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, who was martyred in 2013, shared his view of these verses in his introduction to a critical edition of the *Hamziyyah*:

> I've taken the poem of the *Hamziyyah* as a kind of oasis of solace to which I flee in trying times. I simply sit and recite it coupled with the following refrain after every few lines: "Prayers, O my Lord, upon the one who is a mercy and healing for all of creation." The only lines of the poem I don't include in my recitation are those in which the poet wrangles with the Jews and Christians, belittling their erroneous beliefs, as I consider this portion a long digression that has no real connection to the praise of the Prophet and his intercession with God, which is the essence of the poem and the reason the imam wrote it. Hence, I omit the said section in my devotion, seeking the blessings from the purpose of the poem only.
>
> I cannot recall any time that I sat and read the poem with that refrain of prayer upon the Prophet without soon sensing that my soul had been renewed and reinvigorated.... I recommend that my Muslim brothers and sisters recite it as a litany weekly or biweekly or even once a month.... Feel free to bypass the lines in which the poet takes aim at the Jews and the Christians, refuting them in his lengthy polemic.

We can sense Shaykh al-Būṭī's disquietude. His deep respect for the exalted stature of Imam al-Būṣīrī among lovers of the Prophet ﷺ

most likely prevented him from directly criticizing the poem, but his discomfiture is clear. As someone raised with Irish Catholic and Greek Orthodox Christian family members as well as Jewish relatives through marriage, I too felt unsettled by this section. After mulling it over for some days, I felt compelled to understand such an abrupt departure from the poem's spirit.

Why did a God-fearing poet like Imam al-Būṣīrī include such caustic verses in the middle of his masterpiece? How can we best perceive them, considering the teachings to provide excuses for another's errant words or deeds, to give them the benefit of doubt for any negative thoughts we might have, especially when those errant words or deeds come from pious people such as Imam al-Būṣīrī?

First, we ought to view these verses in the turbulent context of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As mentioned earlier and detailed below, these times were teeming with conflicts among members of the Abrahamic faiths, including Crusader assaults, state subversions, and political upheaval. The caliphate itself had fallen, and Muslims faced grave threats, including suspicions of fifth columns. The latter point is particularly pertinent given that some of the Arab Christians, Jews, and even Muslims had collaborated with the Crusaders at various times.

Second, Imam al-Būṣīrī lived at a time when religious affiliation formed one's primary identity, such that religion defined much of public discourse, which included critiques of any heterodox beliefs of Muslims and others. In the multi-faith milieu of Egypt, the poet no doubt interacted with Jews and Christians. As a devout and orthodox Muslim, his faith clearly informed his views; hence he must have held the Jewish prophets and the founder of Christianity in profound esteem. He would also have viewed the adherents of Judaism as children of prophets, even as he would have believed they had strayed from their scriptures in some instances. Following Qur'anic teachings, he would have recognized the inherent right of Jews and Christians to reject Islam and practice their faiths with relative freedom in Muslim lands—an enlightened perspective that was woefully absent in the Christian Europe of his time.

These beliefs, however, would not have precluded him from trying to persuade his Jewish cousins and Christian brethren of the superiority of his own faith, the abrogation of theirs, and the universal message of Islam delivered by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Having studied comparative religion, he would have believed that both the Torah and the Gospel[4] presaged the coming of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, referred to as *Shiloh* ("the one to whom it belongs") in the Hebrew Bible and *Paraclete* (advocate, intercessor, or helper) in the Christian Bible. And he would have known that many Christians and Jews had embraced Islam in the preceding centuries.

Imam al-Būṣīrī's intention in these verses should be seen as grounded in his sincere wishes that Jews and Christians, blessed with proper knowledge and belief concerning God and all the prophets, would come to understand, accept, and love the last Prophet of God ﷺ. As the Prophet ﷺ said, "You do not truly believe until you love for your fellow man what you love for yourself." While Imam al-Būṣīrī undoubtedly desired the guidance of his brothers from other faiths, he displayed incredulity at their inability to acknowledge and appreciate the Prophet Muhammad's miracles, especially since they accepted so many of the previous prophets and their dispensations. Perhaps as elder brothers often behave, he was attempting to chasten his Abrahamic siblings and to rouse and persuade them, as if to say, "What's wrong with you? Can't you see the truth? Won't you use your intellects?"

Finally, we can attribute the pungency of the verses to the Arabic literary genre of *hijā'* (invective), a highly developed and popular style poets used to showcase their ability to denigrate, often with stinging wit, anyone they thought deserving of ridicule. From the Jahiliya onward, many Arab poets took pride in their mastery of this genre. Hence, in these sixty-six verses, the poet clearly flexes his invective muscle: when he aims at the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, his ridicule reflects perfectly this tradition; when he aims at Jews, his barbs seem mainly directed at those of the Prophet's time who had treacherously betrayed him after having allied with him, especially when the fledgling Muslim faithful faced an existential threat from Mecca's pagans who conspired with the Jews to exterminate the Prophet ﷺ and his community.

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[4] For Muslims, the Gospel of Jesus ﵇, or his revelation, was not four but one. Scholars today refer to it as the Q gospel or Q source. Muslims consider the four Gospels that Christians revere today to be unreliable sources of the original teachings of Jesus ﵇.

The Question of Antisemitism

Some readers might be tempted to ascribe the troubling section of the imam's poem to antisemitism. This would be a mistake for several reasons, the least of which being that such attribution would be grossly anachronistic. The issue of antisemitism is undeniably a serious concern. Currently, criticism of Jews has become a major lightning-rod issue in public discourse, with the modern term *antisemitism* taking on a highly charged and contentious definition; its use has bred much fear and animosity among Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as others. But it would be neither reasonable nor accurate to label Imam al-Būṣīrī's criticism of Jews in the *Hamziyyah* as antisemitic; it would be unfair to apply this modern term to a thirteenth-century poet's critiques of truth claims he viewed as false and historical actions of a religiously motivated community he deemed treacherous.

The term *antisemitism* originated among orientalists in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[5] The original term *semitic* was coined in the eighteenth century by German orientalist August Ludwig von Schlözer (d. 1809) to designate a group of languages that included Aramaic, Arabic, and Hebrew. The term *antisemitic* was used later by Moritz Steinschneider (d. 1907), a Jewish Moravian orientalist and scholar of the Qur'an, as a response to a claim by French orientalist Ernest Renan (d. 1892) that the Semitic races (he meant Arabs and Middle Eastern Jews) were inferior to the Aryan race.[6] Given this history, I chose to use the term *Judaists* instead of *Jews* when translating the Arabic word *yahūd* in the *Hamziyyah*. My reasons are twofold: *Judaists* denotes either adherents to or supporters of the truth claims collectively known as *Judaism*, which denotes a religion that millions of people adhere to, have ties to, or support, including tens of millions of Christian Zionists, especially in America; the term *Jews*, on the other hand, refers not only to a religious community but also to an ethnic group found dispersed around the globe due to their historical diaspora—the latter may or may not adhere to the religion of Judaism but identify ethnically as Jews.

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[5] The term *antisemitic* first appeared publicly in 1879 in the German politician Wilhelm Marr's pamphlet entitled *The Way to Victory of Germanism over Judaism*; it described prejudice against Jews in particular. Prejudice against Jews undeniably exists in our time, but so does prejudice against their Semitic brothers, the Arabs. In addition to Jews, the term *antisemitic* should include the unacknowledged prejudice against Arabs as well. (Linguist and social critic Noam Chomsky remarked that anti-Arab sentiment was the last acceptable prejudice in the West.) Furthermore, the widespread overuse of *antisemitic* indicates its loss of meaning; many people now label any criticism of Judaism, Zionism, or the State of Israel as "antisemitic." In her recent book, *Antisemitism: Here and Now*, Deborah Lipstadt, considered a leading expert on the topic, writes, "It is hard, if not impossible, to explain something that is essentially irrational, delusional, and absurd." Defined as an "irrational opposition to all things Jewish, including Judaism," the term *antisemitism* is not a useful tool for distinguishing between genuine irrational hatred of Jews and rational criticism of, for instance, policies or actions of the Israeli state or critiques of the doctrines of Judaism. However, if we are referring to an ethnic animus toward Semitic people merely for their being Semites, especially Jews, then Lipstadt's definition stands, as all racial and ethnic prejudice is clearly "irrational, delusional, and absurd." However, deploying this term to suppress *rational* criticism of the truth claims of Judaism, or of state violence against civilians, to effectively shut down discourse serves simply as a term of abuse that works, like all terms of abuse, only to

Imam al-Būṣīrī aims his caustic critique strictly at the vicious behavior of some Judaists and their truth claims, which his own faith rejects. Imam al-Būṣīrī did not belong to any movement or group that targeted Jews for political, social, or economic reasons; he was denouncing falsehoods in their faith, condemning their treasonous acts in Medina, and defending his beloved Prophet ﷺ against their calumnies. Nevertheless, in this section of the *Hamziyyah*, he never denigrates the Jewish prophets or their revelations but condemns only what he deems the deviations of their followers due to their misguided interpretations and the alterations that occurred in their scriptures. This is an important distinction.

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the degree to which it lacks any clear and universally agreed-upon definition.

[6] Interestingly, Renan did not consider European Ashkenazi Jews as Semites but as a Turkic people from the Caspian Sea region. Renan was an early proponent of the Khazar conversion theory, later promoted in the 1970s by Hungarian-born novelist and journalist Arthur Koestler (d. 1983). This theory posited that Ashkenazi Jews were Khazar refugees who, after converting to Judaism, had migrated westward into Europe from the Khazar Khaganate, a Turkic commercial empire near the Caspian Sea. According to contemporary Middle East expert Alastair Crooke, many Eastern Jews do not consider Jews of European origin to be semitic either.

We all have an inalienable right to civilly challenge truth claims, whether religious or secular, without being accused of religious or racial prejudice or bigotry. Our faith and humanity require that we categorically condemn religious, racial, and ethnic prejudice. Disagreement does not equal denigration. Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as monarchy, democracy, capitalism, socialism, and Marxism, all include truth claims, whether about religion, government, or economics. One should be able to reject or critique any or all such claims with reasoned arguments without imputation of racial or ethnic animus. However, because both Hinduism and Judaism have an ethnic component, criticizing their truth claims can be easily misconstrued as an ethnic prejudice. Hence, a distinction that demarcates the truth claims from the ethnicities becomes essential. For instance, many ethnic Jews have serious criticisms of Judaism; twentieth-century Jewish scholar Israel Shahak (d. 2001), for example, considered some versions of Orthodox Judaism's tenets racist and dangerous. Yet that should not justify labeling him as antisemitic, just as a critic of Islam's truth claims should not be designated as racist against Arabs, South Asians, or any other ethnicity.

The Wider Context: Life in a Time of Turbulence

Many contemporary Americans and Europeans have little sense of history and may even view it as irrelevant to their lives. Whatever history they think they know derives almost entirely from films that invariably distort, romanticize, or vilify non-Western peoples. In *Crusade and Jihad: The Thousand-Year War between the Muslim World and the Global North*, historian William R. Polk writes,

> Indeed, the movies often provide the only history we know. But they come at a price: they simplify and distort, so what we get is often a false impression. When we think of the century of warfare on the Northwest Frontier (the unconquered area between Afghanistan and Pakistan), we are guided by Rudyard Kipling. It is Sean Connery as "the man who would be king," not the people he would rule, who catches our attention. In Morocco it is Gary Cooper in *Beau Geste*. We all know that the Arab struggle for independence was the work of Peter O'Toole's *Lawrence of Arabia*. In *Blackhawk Down*, our decent, brave, clean-cut young men valiantly defended themselves against vicious hordes of savages.

> It is not easy for us in the [Global] North to understand history as experienced by the peoples of the [Global] South. Drama requires heroes, and those we remember are our people, not theirs. They are the fanatics; the sinister, dark people; the benighted natives; a mass, not individuals.

For most devout Muslims, however, the past remains present, relevant, and steeped in nostalgia. Much of it evokes pride in historical greatness and achievement rather than resentment about past injustices. Indeed, many Muslims find their historical heroes in the great resistance fighters who defended Muslim lands against the relentless onslaught of foreign aggressors.

But foremost among all Muslim heroes remains the Prophet ﷺ himself. Orientalists often refer to the period from the eighth to the thirteenth century—an era of scientific and cultural flourishing, as well as conquests and conversions—as the golden age of Islam. For educated Muslims, though, the time of the Prophet ﷺ stands as Islam's true golden age, its most consequential period. Though many Muslims have some grasp of the Prophet's biography and the broad contours of his mission, scholars and saints have always advised them to increase their love and knowledge through a more detailed remembrance of the Prophet's life and deeds, matters that touch both the heart and the intellect. Imam al-Būṣīrī, a magisterial scholar of prophetic biography, outshines all the others through his *Burdah* and *Hamziyyah*, which edify believers with rich details of the Prophet's miraculous life and evoke a love of their subject that prose fails to convey as effectively.

To truly appreciate the *Hamziyyah*, and to understand its significant yet surprisingly harsh references to Judaism and Christianity, we must take a closer look at the historical events in the region before and during Imam al-Būṣīrī's lifetime that influenced his outlook. History inevitably shapes cultures and societies, and no individual—whether poet, philosopher, politician, or peasant—remains immune to that shaping. Imam al-Būṣīrī's time and place, and the momentous events that preceded that time, included tectonic shifts spurred by Caliphates and Crusades, Mamluks and Mongols, conflicts and conciliations.

In 909, some three hundred years before Imam al-Būṣīrī's birth, the Fatimid dynasty, an Ismaili Shia sect, had established a caliphate in Tunisia, rivaling the Abbasid Caliphate; sixty years later, they conquered

Egypt and built their new capital, Cairo (al-Qāhirah). They soon conquered parts of the Levant, including Syria and Palestine, and their rule eventually reached the Hejaz and Yemen.

Largely tolerant toward Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Jews, Fatimid rule brought economic and scientific prosperity. However, it also had its dark times, especially under the autocratic and maniacal rule of al-Ḥākim (d. 1021), who not only persecuted minorities but ordered the long-protected Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to be torched in 1009. That conflagration resounded throughout the Christian world, and eighty-seven years later, in 1096, Pope Urban II invoked it as one of his pretexts to launch the first of eight Crusades by the Christian Latin Church against the Muslims of Palestine.

That Crusade included the bloody and brutal Siege of Jerusalem in 1099. Arab historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233) estimated that seventy thousand Muslims, Jews,[7] and Christians[8] were slaughtered; even the most conservative modern historians put that number at around forty thousand. As many as ten thousand may have been killed on the sacred ground known to most Westerners as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf (the Noble Sanctuary), Islam's third-holiest site, which contains the Dome of the Rock as well as Masjid al-Aqṣā (the Farthest Mosque). European Crusaders converted the former into a church with a cross atop it and the latter into their knights' headquarters and a stable for their horses.[9] This siege, with its disdainful desecrations, sent a shockwave throughout Muslim lands that reverberated for decades and, arguably, echoes to this day.

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[7] A Jewish community had flourished in Jerusalem since the Muslims first conquered it in 638. Prior to the Muslim conquest, Jews were not permitted to reside in Jerusalem by Christian edict. The second caliph, 'Umar ﵁, allowed the Jews to return after their prior banishment at the hands of the Byzantine Christians. Before the creation of Israel in 1948, Jews lived in relative peace among Muslims in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Turkey, Iran, and other Muslim polities. Today, small Jewish communities still exist in Morocco, Tunisia, and Iran, and a few Jewish families have remained in Yemen.

[8] Like their Jewish counterparts, many Arab Christians maintained their religion after the Muslim conquests of the Levant, Iraq, Egypt, and North Africa, while others chose to embrace Islam; conversions to Islam in these areas occurred gradually, over several hundred years. Forced conversions were rare under Muslim rule, and scholars rejected the legitimacy of forced conversions based upon the uniquely Qur'anic injunction: "Let there be no coercion in religion" (2:256). Indeed, millions of Arab Christians continue to live among Muslims in many Arab lands. Unfortunately, due to Western "Christian" and Zionist aggression in many Arab and Muslim countries, traditional ties and civility have broken down in some of these countries, not dissimilar to what happened during Imam al-Būṣīrī's time.

The Crusades continued for two centuries, with armies invading part or all of present-day Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Syria, Cyprus, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. During that period, Muslim lands across the region underwent major political upheavals: Fatimid power waned during the twelfth century with the rise of the Seljuk Empire, a Sunni Muslim dynasty also targeted by the Crusades. The Seljuk Sultanate soon devolved into smaller states. Even before it disappeared outside the Anatolian Peninsula in 1194, it was gradually displaced by the Zengid dynasty, which extended its power to northern Iraq and present-day Syria (1127–1186). Each of these dynasties gave nominal allegiance to the Abbasid Caliphate, which later restored its independence centered in Baghdad (1152–1258).

In a Muslim victory in 1119, Ilghāzī, the Artuqid ruler of Mardin, killed Roger of Salerno, the regent of the Principate of Antioch (1112–19), and annihilated his army at the Field of Blood. Thereafter, the Zengid dynasty led a significant string of victories against the Crusaders. ʻImād al-Dīn Zinkī, the atabeg of Mosul and Aleppo (1127/28–46), reconquered Edessa from the Crusaders in 1144, which provoked the Second Crusade. It was ʻImād al-Dīn Zinkī's son, Zengid ruler Nūr al-Dīn (d. 1174), whose successes finally dispelled the Crusaders' "aura of invincibility." When the last Fatimid caliph in Egypt, al-ʻĀḍid (d. 1171), asked for support against another Crusader incursion, Nūr al-Dīn sent his general Shīrkūh, who defeated the Crusaders and gained control over all of Egypt in 1169; Shīrkūh died that same year. His nephew Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī

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[9] Upon conquering the city, the second caliph, ʻUmar ﵁, to his dismay, found the Temple Mount being used as a garbage dump by the Christians. Along with his soldiers, ʻUmar ﵁ personally cleaned the Noble Sanctuary, ridding it of garbage, and then sanctified the Mosque of David ﵇ where the Dome of the Rock now stands, which was pointed out to him by the Jewish convert Kaʻb al-Aḥbār ﵁ (d. 656), who accompanied ʻUmar ﵁ to Jerusalem.

(d. 1193), a Fatimid minister and scholar-warrior who replaced him, became governor of Egypt in 1171 and removed the last of the Fatimids, establishing the first Ayyubid dynasty, which gave a nominal allegiance to Nūr al-Dīn and the Abbasid Caliphate in the East.

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, known in the West as "Saladin," became a formidable foe of the Crusaders. After solidifying Sunni rule in Egypt and following the death of Nūr al-Dīn in 1174, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn conquered Syria and pursued the liberation of the Holy Lands from the Crusaders, who by then had occupied most of Palestine for almost a hundred years. Months after the momentous Battle of Hattin on July 4, 1187, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn successfully liberated Jerusalem, ending the eighty-eight-year rule of the first Kingdom of Jerusalem.

The Ayyubids maintained control of Jerusalem until 1229, when Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II negotiated the city's return to the Christians by leveraging the Fifth Crusade, which had targeted Lower Egypt. The Egyptian front occupied the resources of Sultan al-Kāmil (d. 1238), the fourth Ayyubid ruler of Egypt, leaving him helpless to engage a second front in Palestine and giving him no alternative but to negotiate terms. A scholar in his own right and a deeply pious Muslim, Sultan al-Kāmil had met and famously honored St. Francis of Assisi in 1219. He is also known for making a surprising and humane gesture to the invaders of his land: he sent food to the starving army of the Fifth Crusade despite their defeated status and the terrible drought affecting his own people.[10]

Though Sultan al-Kāmil was harshly criticized by many Muslims for returning Jerusalem to the Christians, he negotiated excellent terms in his truce: first, the Sanctuary of the Farthest Mosque and the Dome of the Rock would remain in Muslim hands; second, all Muslim residents of Jerusalem would keep their homes and properties; lastly, freedom of religion for Muslims, Jews, and Orthodox Christians would be guaranteed along with peace for at least ten years.

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[10] The German bishop and eyewitness to Sultan al-Kāmil's generous act, Oliver of Paderborn (d. 1227), wrote in his *Chronicles of the Crusades*: "Who could doubt that such goodness, friendship, and charity come from God? Men whose parents, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, had died in agony at our hands, whose lands we took, whom we drove naked from their homes, revived us with their own food when we were dying of hunger and showered us with kindness even when we were in their power."

Imam al-Būṣīrī, who would have been eighteen years old when Sultan al-Kāmil negotiated that truce, lived to see Jerusalem change hands several more times. The city returned to the Muslims when the sultan's truce with the Crusaders expired in 1239. However, the Crusaders reconquered it the following year. In 1244, it was again restored to the Muslims at the hands of the Khwarazmians, a roaming army of ronin-like Turks who had lost most of their vast empire to Genghis Khan during the Mongol invasion of the eastern Muslim lands from 1219 to 1221 and who were driven out of the last vestiges of their empire in 1231.

Imam al-Būṣīrī would have known of the tumultuous power struggles that wracked the region, including the devastating Mongol invasion and conquest of Central Asia, Iran, and Iraq that eventually caused the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate in 1258. He would also have known of the tragic destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of both Crusaders and Muslims.[11] Closer to home, he likely witnessed the transfer of Muslim rule in Egypt to the Mamluks, a non-Arab, Praetorian-like class of military slaves who deposed the Ayyubids and established their own sultanate in 1250. Along with regional Muslims, he no doubt celebrated the first major defeat of the Mongols at Ain Jalut, Palestine, in 1260, which constrained them from taking the Holy Lands. In his final years, Imam al-Būṣīrī would have learned that the Mamluk Sultanate had expelled the Crusaders from Palestine, ending nearly two hundred years of their rule (1098–1291). The Crusader kingdom's presence, after being reduced to a mere principality centered in Acre, disappeared entirely from Palestine in 1291, and Western hegemony did not return until 1917, with the Ottoman defeat at the hands of the British and their nationalist Arab allies.

All these events would have informed the poet's sentiments toward Jews and Christians. After the Crusades, the various sultanates, particularly the Mamluks, became less tolerant of Christian political intrusions in their region. They not only reduced the Crusader strongholds one by one but also crushed the Lesser Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia, which had colluded with both the Crusaders and the Mongols.

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[11] When Jerusalem was handed back to the Christians during Sultan al-Kāmil's reign, the Muslims destroyed the walls of the city to facilitate any later reconquest.

As for the Jewish communities living among the dominant Muslim polities of that time in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq, they were most likely viewed in irenic times with ambivalence by the governments and as second-class minorities by common Muslims. On the one hand, the governments of these regions relied on Jewish trading networks for information about foreign countries and perceived them as no religious threat to Muslims, since Jews do not proselytize. On the other hand, especially during the charged atmosphere of the Crusades, Muslim rulers would have regarded Jews with suspicion because they were seen as singularly loyal to their own community; governments would have assumed that since Jews provided Muslims with information, they probably did the same for the Crusaders as well. But even if Muslims distrusted the Jews, they had little reason to view them as a serious threat or a fifth column, as weak and dispersed as they were.

Although Jews have sometimes been ill-treated as dhimmis[12] and even subjected to violent persecution by Muslims who transgressed the

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[12] Much confusion exists about the concept of dhimmitude. The word *dhimmis* (protected ones) refers to members of any religious minority or subjected group living under Muslim rule. While dhimmis had legal rights alongside Muslims, they also had restrictions that obviated full enfranchisement. The Prophet ﷺ warned his followers: "If anyone mistreats a dhimmi, [know] that I will be his advocate [against the Muslim] on the Day of Judgment." The Muslim polity was responsible for ensuring the rights of dhimmis and guarding them from any infringement of those rights. However, the system has a checkered history, with both enlightened periods of flourishing and dark ones of oppression. The Ottomans, with religious sanction from the great scholars of their empire, abolished the system in 1839. Polymath jurist Abdallah bin Bayyah does not consider the dhimmi system a necessary aspect of shariah in a Muslim polity, and it was not always implemented by Muslim rulers throughout Islam's history. The system resembles greatly the relationship between sovereign Native American nations within the United States and the federal government. The Federal Bar Association states that the federal government "has special obligations to protect tribal lands and resources, defend tribal right to self-government, and provide services necessary for tribal survival." This reflects closely the intent behind the dhimmi status of minority communities in Islam. They had a type of autonomy that included their own civil

Prophet's teachings, in medieval times they generally fared considerably better in Muslim lands than in Christian realms. For their part, Jews in this period, while trying to avoid politics, were more sympathetic toward Muslims than toward Christians, seeing Christians as more likely to oppress or harm them than their Muslim protectors.

Spiritual Renewal and Renaissance

The dark cloud of conquests of Muslim lands by the Crusaders and the Mongols did have its silver lining: it prompted much reflection and introspection within the Muslim community, especially among scholars and sages, which led to a profound intellectual and spiritual revival. In his important late-twentieth-century work, *This Is How Saladin's Generation Emerged and Jerusalem Was Restored*, Jordanian historian Majid al-Kilani (d. 2015) points to the restorative benefit of this revival, which was instigated by several scholars, the most crucial and consequential of whom was the luminary of the Islamic intellectual tradition, a man on whom the Muslim community bestowed the epithet "Proof of Islam," Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). His tomes on *islām*, *īmān*, and *iḥsān* became revivalist works in jurisprudence, theology, and ethics, and he was considered unanimously to be the fifth

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courts and governing administrations, with the promise of protection and security from the Muslim polity. Harvard historian William Polk writes, "Since the time of Muhammad, who made a treaty with the non-Muslim community of Madinah, Islam has evolved a pattern for regulating the lives of non-Muslims. Jews and Christians lived as protected communities (dhimmis). Except in military affairs, each community was allowed to live according to its own customs, arrange for its own community services, maintain its own religious institutions, and govern itself.... Whole communities of Hindus were also eventually incorporated into Muslim states. Except in the heat of warfare, the Islamic states customarily left these people free to practice their religions, wear their distinctive dress, speak their own languages, enforce their own laws and customs, and govern themselves under their own authorities." Today, for instance, the Coptic Church has millions of adherents throughout Egypt. In the nineteenth century, Muslim scholar Imam al-Ṣāwī (d. 1825) expressed his pain on hearing Muslims say, "I wish I were a Christian," due to the high standard of living and the many benefits they had in Muḥammad ʿAlī's modern Egypt.

Islamic century's "reviver" of Islam.[13]

According to al-Kilani, Imam al-Ghazālī grounded his project—to reinvigorate the Muslim moral, intellectual, and spiritual tradition and through it restore society's overall flourishing—on two core principles: The first was that the Muslim community's raison d'être was to spread the message of Islam, based upon the Qur'anic verse "You are the best community that has come forth for humanity; you enjoin virtue, condemn vice, and you believe in God" (3:110). The second was the importance of understanding why Muslims had abandoned this collective obligation to enjoin virtue and condemn vice; in other words, Imam al-Ghazālī intended to study the root causes of the problem—not to cast blame but to identify reasons for the malaise and inertia he observed in Muslim societies—and then to offer a sound diagnosis and treatment plan.

Al-Kilani identifies the following characteristics in Imam al-Ghazālī's plan for revival:

> His books are entirely free of instigating Muslims to fight "jihad" against the Crusaders or even detailing or condemning them for their barbarity and crimes they perpetrated against the Muslims. The second quality his works possess is serious self-criticism. For that reason, he never resorts to justifications or thrusting the responsibility for the conditions on the invading powers that were inclined to attack due to the weakness they saw and the susceptibility of conquest. This approach is clearly Qur'anic given the Islamic principle that says, "Any affliction that befalls you is from what your own hands have wrought" (42:30).... For this reason, al-Ghazālī addresses the causes of defeat rather than weeping crocodile tears over the actual defeat.

This approach was later revived by Algerian intellectual and renewer Malek Bennabi (d. 1973), who argued that colonialism resulted from weakness within the Muslim community, not from the strength of the colonizers. Bennabi recognized that the weakness of Muslims—the disunity and loss of order in their lands—enabled the Europeans to conquer them with ease, like the ease with which fifteen thousand

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[13] The Prophet ﷺ stated, "God will send at the head of every century one who renews Islam." Scholars have identified these men throughout Muslim history and are in agreement that Imam al-Ghazālī is one of them.

Crusader knights had overwhelmed tens of thousands of Muslims of the Levant. We find Bennabi's perspective brilliantly expressed in Ulysses's famous speech in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (act 1, scene 3):

> Take but degree [hierarchical order or *adab*] away, untune that string,
> And, hark, what discord follows! Each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores
> And make a sop of all this solid globe:
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead:
> Force should be right; or, rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then every thing includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey,
> And last eat up himself. Great Agamemnon,
> This chaos, when degree is suffocate,
> Follows the choking.
> And this neglection of degree it is
> That by a pace goes backward, with a purpose
> It hath to climb. The general's disdain'd
> By him one step below, he by the next,
> That next by him beneath; so every step,
> Exampled by the first pace that is sick
> Of his superior, grows to an envious fever
> Of pale and bloodless emulation:
> And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,
> Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,
> Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength.

Such revivers as Imam al-Ghazālī understood that the Crusaders "in Muslim weakness stood, not in their strength." Far too many Muslims today ground their critiques in the external soil of politics, aligning themselves horizontally with the perspective of secular allies, but Imam al-Ghazālī rooted his analysis in the introspective soil of spirituality, aligning vertically with the sacred truths of the Qur'an and prophetic tradition. When the Prophet ﷺ told his companions that toward the latter days the Europeans would eat their resources like diners at a plate, they asked, "Is it from the paucity of our numbers, O Messenger of God?" He replied, "No, you will be multitudes, but you will be insubstantial like the spume on a torrent. Awe of you will be removed from the hearts of your enemies, and weakness—love of materialism and loss of the will to resist—will inhere in yours." In accord with the Prophet's deep understanding of the susceptibility to defeat from internal weakness, Imam al-Ghazālī's spiritual analysis of the crisis resonated widely and enabled the emergence of a new generation of Muslims who, fortified by self-reflection and subsequent self-rectification, would free Jerusalem during Imam al-Būṣīrī's lifetime.

Like the Prophet's poet Ḥassān b. Thābit ؓ (d. 674) before him, Imam al-Būṣīrī participated in this spiritual and cultural renaissance through poetry that inculcated a deep love for the Prophet ﷺ, inspiring a new generation of believers with a renewed commitment to the truths of Islam and devotion to the One who revealed them. The impact of this poem continues to resonate in Muslim hearts to this day.

The Way Forward

In our increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, the need for mutual respect and virtuous behavior toward one another has never been greater. The world's sacred scriptures contain much practical guidance that, if properly promoted and implemented, would mitigate many of the conflicts that plague our world. Yet instead of helping to ensure more civil societies, too often our religious communities add to alienation, demonizing those who are "not like us" and falling into a triumphalist tribalism.[14]

Historically, most Muslim scholars who criticized their Abrahamic kin were careful to convey their respect for the founders and prophets of those faiths as well as for their revelations. To disparage any Jewish prophet or the Messiah Jesus ؑ violates the very tenets of Islam; furthermore, Muslims must assent to the revelations, albeit altered, of the Torah, the Psalms, and the Gospel of Jesus ﵇. Most Muslim criticism of Judaism and Christianity has been aimed at certain beliefs that Muslims consider erroneous, altered, or added later.

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[14] As polymath English scholar Timothy Winter quipped, "Modern Islam: triumphalism without the triumph."

Many Christian and Jewish scholars, priests, rabbis, and poets, on the other hand, have gone beyond criticizing the truth claims of Islam; they have pilloried the Prophet of Islam himself ﷺ with invectives and accusations of the most demeaning nature. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, considered among the greatest works of Western literature, provides a cogent example: the reader finds a scathing invective against the Prophet of Islam ﷺ and his cousin and son-in-law, the fourth caliph, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ﵁. Too many Westerners find it difficult to grasp how hurtful such words can be, because they have no idea of the deep and abiding love devout Muslims have for their Prophet ﷺ, whose ways they strive to emulate and whose character they aspire to embody.

We must acknowledge that Jewish and Muslim communities have had many conflicts in their long and checkered history, but we would do well also to recall—and to exemplify—the abundant examples of collaboration, cooperation, and mutual edification shared between our communities. Throughout history, Jews have found safe havens, and have even flourished, in Muslim polities.

Consider the case of one of Judaism's greatest scholars and polymaths, Rabbi Maimonides (d. 1204), known affectionately by Jewish scribes as Rambam, who was born in Cordoba during the rule of the Muslim Almoravid Empire. The Almoravids had allowed Jewish communities to flourish, but when the Almohads conquered Spain in 1148, Maimonides was forced to escape their persecution of the Jewish community. He fled to Muslim Ayyubid Egypt, where he became a highly influential minister and personal physician to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his Ayyubid court. Maimonides's many works of philosophy were greatly influenced by eminent Islamic scholars such as al-Fārābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), and Ibn Rushd (d. 1198). Maimonides died in the town of Fustat in Old Cairo, seven years before Imam al-Būṣīrī was born in southern Egypt.

Again, we find that during the apex of Ottoman rule (1300–1600), Jews thrived in their empire, and some were counted among the most successful traders as well as diplomats of the court. German Rabbi

Yitzhak Sarfati migrated to Ottoman Turkey in 1453 and became the chief rabbi of Edirne. Elated by the newfound freedom and dignity he experienced, he wrote a now famous letter to the Jews of Germany, encouraging them to migrate to Turkey. In the letter, he first acknowledged the abuse and discrimination of Jews in Germany, writing, "I have heard of the afflictions, more bitter than death, that have befallen our brethren in Germany—of the tyrannical laws, the compulsory baptisms and the banishments, which are of daily occurrence." He then stated he knew that Christians had "made a law that every Jew found upon a Christian ship bound for the East shall be flung into the sea." Then he offered this advice to them:

> Brothers and teachers, friends and acquaintances! I, Isaac Zarfati, though I spring from a French stock, yet I was born in Germany and sat there at the feet of my esteemed teachers. I proclaim to you that Turkey is a land wherein nothing is lacking, and where, if you will, all shall yet be well with you. The way to the Holy Land lies open to you through Turkey. Is it not better for you to live under Muslims than under Christians? Here every man may dwell at peace under his own vine and fig tree. Here you are allowed to wear the most precious garments.... O Israel, wherefore sleepest thou? Arise! And leave this accursed land forever!

Even in late Ottoman rule, between 1881 and 1917, Jews fleeing persecution in Russia and Poland found refuge in Ottoman Palestine.

Once again, our community faces tragic events in the Holy Lands far worse than even the events of Imam al-Būṣīrī's time, given the massive destructive force of modern warfare and its horrific effects on civilian populations. Moreover, the global discourse of demonizing others has deepened the fissures among those of us who share Abraham ﵇ as a progenitor of our shared prophets.

The scriptures of all three Abrahamic faiths call on us to respect all human beings, whether they be neighbors or strangers. Jews are reminded in the Torah: "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21). Jesus ﵇ distilled the Ten Commandments into two: "The most important is 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these'" (Mark 12:29–31). The Qur'an teaches: "We created you from a male and a female, and We made you races and tribes for you to get to know each other. The most noble of you in the sight of God are those who are most conscientious" (49:13). The Qur'an even warns Muslims not to revile pagan idols, as this may cause pagans to revile God: "And do not insult what they pray to besides God, lest they revile God in a hostile way, without knowledge" (6:108).

The faith traditions we have inherited were often tainted by the prejudices of previous times; yet our faiths were meant to unite our hearts with those of our brothers and sisters, including strangers. As the Arabian poet al-Mutanabbī (d. 965) reminds us:

> Men, though separate, need one another;
> Without knowing, each serves the other.

Many adherents of our faiths fail to see the *imago Dei* in our fellow humans. Yet the teachings are clear. Almost every faith has its own version of what is known as the *Golden Rule*: we must treat others as we want to be treated by them. We must restore the vision of the Abrahamic faiths and see our species as *banū Ādam*—the children of Adam ﵇; we must not lose sight of our shared humanity as descendants of one father and one mother.

Each tradition also has extremists who adhere to the worst aspects of religion, those that alienate so many modern people. As their influence increases, the possibility of peace diminishes, and wars and potential wars loom large. If the reasonable voices in these religions do not prevail, more and more people will give up on faith and see religion as a dangerous relic of bygone days, better forgotten than retained. In the case of Islam, these voices, however amplified by the media, do not represent most believers. Far from it: in fact, they comprise an insignificant number of the almost two billion Muslims around the globe. People who have had the good fortune to visit Muslim-majority countries are invariably surprised by the goodness and hospitality of many of their citizens, especially those who reflect best the teachings of their Prophet ﷺ.

May God protect us from being poor exemplars of our faith—or worse, from being the reason for others' rejection of the truth. A prayer in the Qur'an says, "Our Lord, don't make us a test for those who scoff; and forgive us, our Lord, for You are the epitome of power and wisdom" (60:5). Commenting on this verse, exegetes say that when we fail to uphold the tenets of our faith, we become a trial for others and may even cause them to turn away from truth. And the immediate petition for forgiveness in the verse indicates that leading others astray should be a greater concern than going astray ourselves because, on the Day of Judgment, harming others endangers the soul more than self-harm.

The Qur'an clearly states that the precondition for speaking to others about one's religion is to abide by one's own scripture; believers who do not learn and embody what their own faith teaches lack credibility when challenging the faith of others:

> Say, "O Jews and Christians, you have nothing to stand on unless you live up to the Torah and the Gospel and everything sent down to you from your Lord." But what has been revealed to you will surely increase tyranny and atheism in the majority of them. So do not be distressed over atheistic people. Surely, the Muslims and the Jews, and the Sabians and the Christians, any who believe in God and the last day and do good, will not be in fear and they will not grieve. (5:68–69)

The clear presumption of the verses obliges Muslims, above all, to live up to their own scripture's teachings.

The Prophetic Way

For Muslims, all guidance through our journey in this world comes from God's speech in the Qur'an and the words and deeds of God's last Prophet ﷺ, though Muslims also revere the prophets who came before him. In each of our five daily prayers, we ask God to send blessings on the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his family—and on Prophet Abraham ﷷ and his family. We are taught to emulate the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, follow his ways, and strive to perfect our character in accord with his.

The Qur'an tells us: "You have an excellent example, in the Messenger of God, for anyone who looks forward to God and the last day and remembers God a lot" (33:21). The more intimate we become with the Qur'an, the more knowledge we acquire of the noble virtues of the Prophet's character. When the Prophet's beloved wife 'Ā'ishah ؓ was asked to describe the Prophet's ethos, she brilliantly replied, "His character *was* the Qur'an!" The Prophet's virtues include, among many others, humility; forbearance; patience; dignity; chastity; charity; kindness; piety; and, above all, mercy and compassion for all—Muslims and others alike.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "None of you truly believes until he loves for his fellow man what he loves for himself." Prophetic character entails treating all of humanity well, whether they be Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, or people of other faiths and persuasions, or of no faith. In one of the most compelling ecumenical verses in the Qur'an, God tells us:

> For each of them, We have established a law, and a revealed way. And if God wished, God would have made you a single nation; but the intent is to test you in what God has given you. So let your goals be everything good. Your destiny, everyone, is to God, Who will tell you about that wherein you differed. (5:48)

We have no better exemplar of that Qur'anic teaching than the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who, during the height of the Muslim and Jewish conflict in Medina, witnessed a funeral procession and stood up as the bier passed by. One of his companions pointed out, "It's a Jew, O Messenger of God!" In a tone I can only imagine, the Prophet ﷺ responded, "Isn't it a human soul?"

The Prophet's point here indicates that we are all ensouled in the historical and cultural prison of our times and that we remain confined therein unless we strive to liberate our principial nature (*fiṭrah*) and essential humanity. We are born and raised in families and environments that shape us for good or ill. We did not choose our bodies, nor the personalities that invariably veil us from our true self, as our Prophet ﷺ taught us: "Each of you is born with a principial nature, and it is the parents who enculturate him or her into a Jew, a Christian, or a fire worshiper." We might add to that list "a cultural Muslim," one who no longer embodies the truths of submission to God, *al-Islām*, but merely the prejudices and dysfunctions of our too often wayward families, cultures, and fallen times.

We do not know, nor can we truly understand, another's circumstances and how we would fare in them. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ saw someone in a state of tribulation, he quietly prayed, "Praise be to God, who has protected me from that with which God tried you and has clearly privileged me over much of God's creation." In this prayer lies a recognition that "there, but for the grace of God, go I."

The Prophet ﷺ was the beloved of God and the most grateful of God's servants. It is gratitude, patience, and an abiding love of God and God's last Messenger ﷺ that will restore Muslims to their rightful place as a "community that enjoins right and forbids evil and believes in God." Our Prophet ﷺ reminded us that his community was "like rain: you don't know if the first of it is most beneficial or the last."

Composed by one of the Prophet's greatest lovers, the *Hamziyyah* testifies to Imam al-Būṣīrī's love of God, God's last Messenger ﷺ, and all of God's creation, including his love for the guidance of his Abrahamic brethren, his digression into invective notwithstanding. Our time in this earthly abode is short, and change remains its only constant. When we shed this mortal garment of flesh and leave this temporal abode with souls bared, only our beliefs, deeds, and the works we left behind will accompany us to our destination. While we are here, God has tasked us with being knowers of truth, doers of good, and makers of beauty. Truth, Goodness, and Beauty call every generation back to our essence, and the path to them must be strewn with mercy.

God sent the Prophet ﷺ as a "mercy to all the worlds" (21:107). In an utter state of spiritual submission to his Lord, he embodied mercy—he *was* mercy—and on the Day of Judgment, he will be the comforter, the intercessor, the Paraclete, the one who takes hold of the banner of praise, declaring, "It is mine," as he is Shiloh, "the one to whom it belongs" ﷺ. May we, in spite of all our shortcomings and sins, be with him, pleasing and well pleased, on that momentous day when the debts fall due. As God declares in the final revelation, "On this day, each soul will be recompensed for what it has earned: no injustice today. Surely God is swift at the reckoning!" (40:17).

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A Note on the Translation

Hamza Yusuf

THE POETIC LINES OF THE HAMZIYYAH unfold in a highly stylized Arabic that uses many schemes and tropes that are characteristic of the Arabic rhetorical tradition. The author especially uses rhetorical devices from the *badīʿ* tradition that are difficult to render in English. The elegance and eloquence of the language can only be compared to the finest examples of English poetry found in the works of William Shakespeare, John Donne, John Milton, and Martin Lings. Imam al-Būṣīrī's genius in coining exquisite idioms and phrases led to several of them becoming proverbial in the Arabic language.

English lends itself well to Persian translations, given that Persian follows a stricter syntax with its subject-object-verb order, akin to the English subject-verb-object sentence pattern; Arabic, on the other hand, differs greatly with its far more fluid syntactical expressions, making it difficult for the translator to reveal and convey the inherent beauty of the language and her poets, let alone the sublime perfection of Arabic in the Qur'an. Hence, many of the idioms and puns, as well as the creative and clever tropes and schemes in the *Hamziyyah*, are only found in Arabic and are thus literally "lost in translation"—and this poses challenges for any translator aiming to approximate the linguistic grace and beauty of the original.

I reviewed more than ten commentaries on the poem and relied most heavily on Ibn Ḥajar and Sulaymān al-Jamal's abridgment of that commentary. Imam al-Būṣīrī's poem can be seen as a lexicon of uncommon words; to work within the brevity of his chosen meter, he uses rare words to convey his meaning in order to maintain his glottal-stop rhyme scheme, which alone is a tour de force. Sometimes the syntax is so rarefied that it can only be fully grasped after considerable reflection—hence the many commentaries. Due to differences in the grammatical status of some words in the poem and even recensions in which the diction differs slightly, I resorted to the commentaries of Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn ʿAjībah for a final word; when they concurred, I chose that wording and grammatical construct.

The Arabic poem and my translation were reviewed by three formidable scholars of Arabic, all with an excellent knowledge of English. I was humbled to learn that all three confirmed that the meaning, despite my purposeful omissions and additions to better express them in English, was accurately conveyed. The endnotes provide variant solutions to some differences among the two master grammarians, Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi and Shaykh Muhammad Mahmud Ould Buwaybah.

I chose to convey the Arabic in the idioms and nuances of my mother tongue knowing that it meant this translation would not be a literal one. I have captured the author's intended meaning to the best of my ability, and I hope that the translation will help readers better know the Prophet ﷺ and deepen their love for him through the study and recitation of this righteous and reverential poem.

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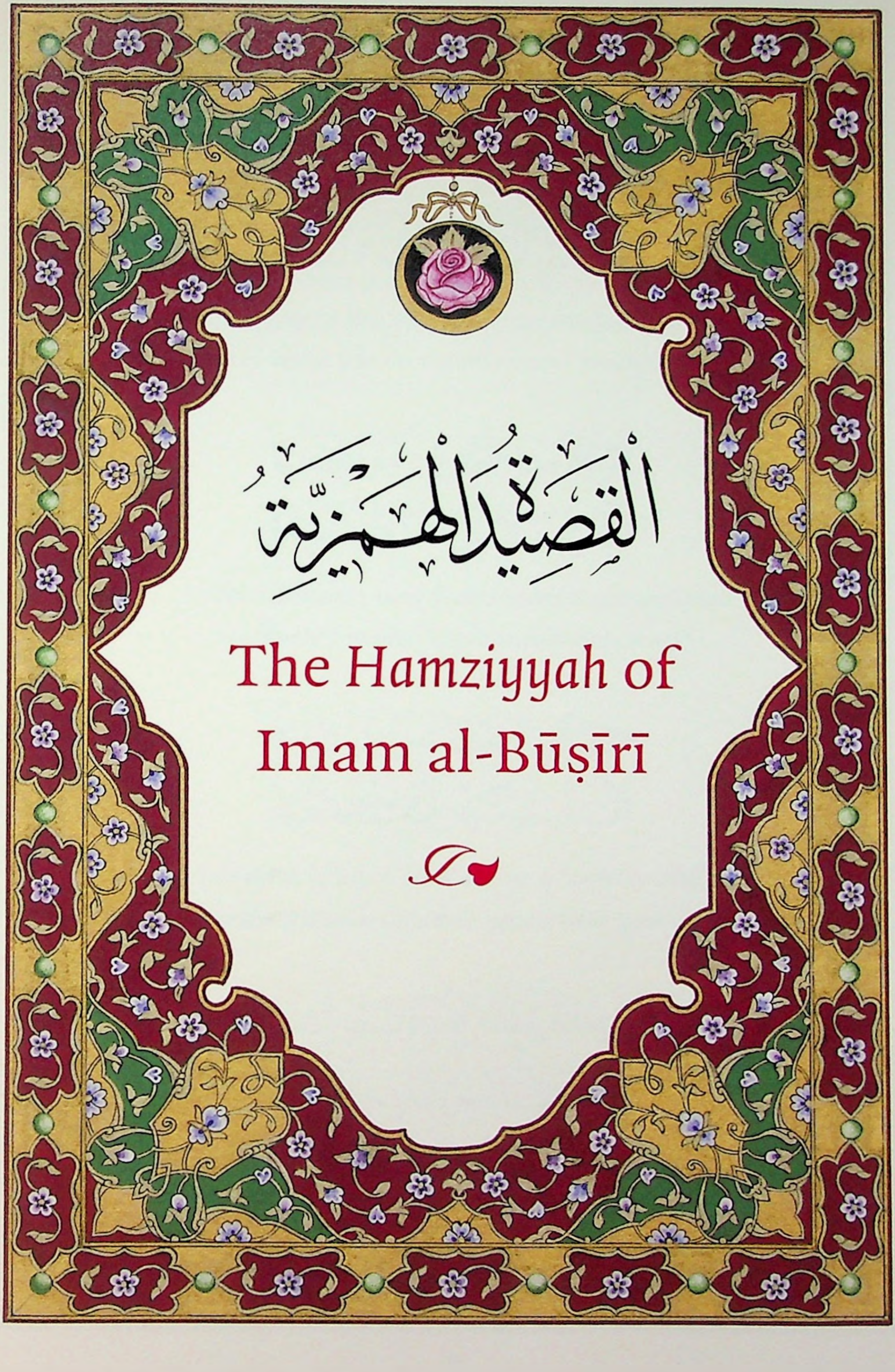

القصيدة الهمزية

The *Hamziyyah* of Imam al-Būṣīrī

كَيْفَ تَرْقَىٰ رُقِيَّكَ ٱلْأَنْبِيَآءُ
يَا سَمَآءً مَا طَاوَلَتْهَا سَمَآءُ

1. *How could other prophets ascend to your heights,*
O Empyrean, whose canopy no sky could surpass?

لَمْ يُسَاوُوكَ فِي عُلَاكَ وَقَدْ حَا
لَ سَنًا مِنْكَ دُونَهُمْ وَسَنَآءُ

2. *They could never reach your elevated stature:*
your splendor and glory tower over them.

إِنَّمَا مَثَّلُوا صِفَاتِكَ لِلنَّا
سِ كَمَا مَثَّلَ ٱلنُّجُومَ ٱلْمَآءُ

3. *They reflect your qualities to all of humanity,*
the way water mirrors the firmament's stars.

أَنْتَ مِصْبَاحُ كُلِّ فَضْلٍ فَمَا تَصْـ
ـدُرُ إِلَّا عَنْ ضَوْئِكَ ٱلْأَضْوَآءُ

4. *You are that lamplight of every virtue;*
all other lights emanate from your light.

لَكَ ذَاتُ ٱلْعُلُومِ مِنْ عَالِمِ ٱلْغَيْـ
بِ وَمِنْهَا لِآدَمَ ٱلْأَسْمَاءُ

5. *You possess the essence of what is knowable*
of the unseen beyond the names Adam knew.[1]

THE NOBILITY OF THE PROPHET'S LINEAGE

لَمْ تَزَلْ فِي ضَمَائِرِ ٱلْكَوْنِ تُخْتَا
رُ لَكَ ٱلْأُمَّهَاتُ وَٱلْآبَاءُ

6. *Esteemed fathers and mothers—an unbroken line—*
were chosen for you from the cache of creation.

مَا مَضَتْ فَتْرَةٌ مِنَ ٱلرُّسْلِ إِلَّا
بَشَّرَتْ قَوْمَهَا بِكَ ٱلْأَنْبِيَاءُ

7. *No period passed between the emissaries of God*
but prophets gladdened their people with news of you.

تَتَبَاهَى بِكَ ٱلْعُصُورُ وَتَسْمُو
بِكَ عَلْيَاءُ بَعْدَهَا عَلْيَاءُ

8. *All prior ages boastfully vied for you: each era*
surpassed the prior due to its proximity to you,

وَبَدَا لِلْوُجُودِ مِنْكَ كَرِيمٌ
مِنْ كَرِيمٍ آبَاؤُهُ كُرَمَآءُ

9. *And you came forth from one ascendant noble*
after another—you whose fathers were all noble—

نَسَبٌ تَحْسِبُ ٱلْعُلَا بِحُلَاهُ
قَلَّدَتْهَا نُجُومَهَا ٱلْجَوْزَآءُ

10. *A lineage, due to its ornaments, the Heights*
reckoned Gemini had bestowed stars upon it,

حَبَّذَا عِقْدُ سُؤْدَدٍ وَفَخَارٍ
أَنْتَ فِيهِ ٱلْيَتِيمَةُ ٱلْعَصْمَآءُ

11. *A necklace of distinction and destined glory,*
and you—you are its unique, sacrosanct jewel!

THE BIRTH OF GOD'S EMISSARY ﷺ

وَمُحَيًّا كَٱلشَّمْسِ مِنْكَ مُضِيءٌ
أَسْفَرَتْ عَنْهُ لَيْلَةٌ غَرَّآءُ

12. *A face like the brilliant sun shines forth from you,*
revealed by a birthnight filled with white light;

لَيلَةُ ٱلمَولِدِ ٱلَّذِى كَانَ لِلدِّيـ
ـنِ سُرُورٌ بِيَومِهِ وَٱزدِهَاءُ

13. *Your birthnight brought about religion's joy,*
followed by a day pulsing with pride-filled glory.

وَتَوَالَتْ بُشْرَى ٱلْهَوَاتِفِ أَنْ قَدْ
وُلِدَ ٱلْمُصْطَفَىٰ وَحَقَّ ٱلْهَنَاءُ

14. *Glad tidings of unseen voices, one after another:*
"The Chosen One arrived today. Joy is justified!"

وَتَدَاعَىٰ إِيوَانُ كِسْرَىٰ وَلَوْلَا
آيَةٌ مِنْكَ مَا تَدَاعَى ٱلْبِنَاءُ

15. *The colonnades of Khosrow collapsed; if not for a*
prodigy from you, they might still be standing.

وَغَدَا كُلُّ بَيْتِ نَارٍ وَفِيهِ
كُرْبَةٌ مِنْ خُمُودِهَا وَبَلَاءُ

16. *Every fire temple[2] now wrecked and ruined,*
desolate due to a doused and extinguished fire.

وَعُيُونٌ لِلْفُرْسِ غَارَتْ فَهَلْ كَا
نَ لِنِيرَانِهِمْ بِهَا اِطْفَاءُ

17. *Persian wellsprings sunk low and dried up.*
Did their waters waylay their temple fires?

مَوْلِدٌ كَانَ مِنْهُ فِى طَالِعِ الْكُفْـ
ـرِ وَبَالٌ عَلَيْهِمُ وَوَبَاءُ

18. *For atheism, his birth brought baleful prospects,*
an awful outcome, and a blight to its people.

THE HONOR BESTOWED UPON LADY ĀMINAH ؓ

فَهَنِيئًا بِهِ لِآمِنَةَ الْفَضْـ
ـلُ الَّذِى شُرِّفَتْ بِهِ حَوَّاءُ

19. *What jubilee and joy he earned for Āminah:*
an equal honor bestowed upon Eve before her!

مَنْ لِحَوَّاءَ اَنَّهَا حَمَلَتْ اَحْـ
ـمَدَ اَوْ اَنَّهَا بِهِ نُفَسَاءُ

20. *While honored, it was not Eve's to conceive Aḥmad*
or reap the reward of his birth's postpartum period.

يَوْمَ نَالَتْ بِوَضْعِهِ ٱبْنَةُ وَهْبٍ
مِنْ فَخَارٍ مَا لَمْ تَنَلْهُ ٱلنِّسَآءُ

21. *That day, Wahb's daughter achieved, by birthing him,*
a glory and pride never garnered by prior women.

وَأَتَتْ قَوْمَهَا بِأَفْضَلِ مِمَّا
حَمَلَتْ قَبْلُ مَرْيَمُ ٱلْعَذْرَآءُ

22. *She brought her nation a nativity more grace-filled*
than what the Virgin Mary before her had borne.

THE PRETERNATURAL OCCURRENCES AT THE PROPHET'S BIRTH

شَمَّتَتْهُ ٱلْأَمْلَاكُ إِذْ وَضَعَتْهُ
وَشَفَتْنَا بِقَوْلِهَا ٱلشَّفَّآءُ

23. *The angels blessed him as he came into the world,*
and Shaffā' overjoyed us by her telling of it later.[3]

رَافِعًا رَأْسَهُ وَفِي ذَٰلِكَ ٱلرَّفْـ
ـعِ إِلَىٰ كُلِّ سُؤْدَدٍ إِيمَآءُ

24. *Born with the crown of his head heaven-bent,*
and in that elevation, what portent of purpose!

رَامِقًا طَرْفُهُ ٱلسَّمَآءَ وَمَرْمَىٰ
عَيْنِ مَنْ شَأْنُهُ ٱلْعُلُوُّ ٱلْعَلَآءُ

25. *His gaze set upon the heights of heaven—the apple of the eye of one whose object is heaven's heights.*

وَتَدَلَّتْ زُهْرُ ٱلنُّجُومِ إِلَيْهِ
فَأَضَآءَتْ بِضَوْئِهَا ٱلْأَرْجَآءُ

26. *Lustrous and radiant stars drew down toward him, and by their bright lights, lands turned luminous.*

وَتَرَآءَتْ قُصُورُ قَيْصَرَ بِٱلرُّو
مِ يَرَاهَا مَنْ دَارُهُ ٱلْبَطْحَآءُ

27. *Caesar's palaces in Byzantium were in plain sight—she whose house in the Hollow lies espied them.*[4]

MIRACLES SEEN DURING THE PROPHET'S NURSING

وَبَدَتْ فِى رَضَاعِهِ مُعْجِزَاتٌ
لَيْسَ فِيهَا عَنِ ٱلْعُيُونِ خَفَآءُ

28. *During his nursing, what clear miracles manifested—such that for beholding eyes nothing was concealed.*

إِذْ أَبَتْهُ لِيُتْمِهِ مُرْضِعَاتٌ
قُلْنَ مَا فِي ٱلْيَتِيمِ عَنَّا غَنَآءُ

*29. The wet nurses refused him due to his fatherlessness,
saying, "What benefit can any orphan bring us?"*

فَأَتَتْهُ مِنْ آلِ سَعْدٍ فَتَاةٌ
قَدْ أَبَتْهَا لِفَقْرِهَا ٱلرُّضَعَآءُ

*30. Then a maid from the clan of Sa'd came upon him
whom the other mothers had refused due to her want.*

أَرْضَعَتْهُ لِبَانَهَا فَسَقَتْهَا
وَبَنِيهَا أَلْبَانَهُنَّ ٱلشَّآءُ

*31. As she suckled him from her blessed breast,
so her flock's milk flowed for her and her children.*

أَصْبَحَتْ شُوَّلًا عِجَافًا وَأَمْسَتْ
مَا بِهَا شَائِلٌ وَلَا عَجْفَآءُ

*32. Just that morning, her sheep were dry with no milk,
yet by nightfall, not one could be found without milk.*

اَخْصَبَ ٱلْعَيْشُ عِنْدَهَا بَعْدَ مَحْلٍ
اِذْ غَدَا لِلنَّبِيِّ مِنْهَا غِذَآءُ

33. *Despite a harsh drought, her livelihood flourished,*
for she was now the source of his nourishment.[5]

يَا لَهَا مِنَّةً لَقَدْ ضُوعِفَ ٱلْأَجْـ
ـرُ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ جِنْسِهَا وَٱلْجَزَآءُ

34. *What a gift granted to her—an amplified reward!*
Requital tendered follows from services rendered.

وَاِذَا سَخَّرَ ٱلْإِلَٰهُ أُنَاسًا
لِسَعِيدٍ فَاِنَّهُمْ سُعَدَآءُ

35. *When God selects some to serve a blessed one,*
they too count among those who are blessed—

حَبَّةٌ اَنْبَتَتْ سَنَابِلَ وَٱلْعَصْـ
ـفُ لَدَيْهِ يَسْتَشْرِفُ ٱلضُّعَفَآءُ

36. *Like a seed that sprouts manifold ears of grain—*
where others in poverty hope only for dry leaves.

وَاَتَتْ جَدَّهُ وَقَدْ فَصَلَتْهُ
وَبِهَا مِنْ فِصَالِهِ ٱلْبُرَحَآءُ

37. *After she weaned him, he returned to his grandfather—*
O what a painful weaning she felt from that parting!

اِذْ اَحَاطَتْ بِهِ مَلَآئِكَةُ ٱللّٰهِ
فَظَنَّتْ بِاَنَّهُمْ قُرَنَآءُ

38. *But when the angels of God had encircled the boy,*
she feared for him lest they be malignant spirits.[6]

وَرَاَىٰ وَجْدَهَا بِهِ وَمِنَ ٱلْوَجْ
دِ لَهِيبٌ تَصْلَىٰ بِهِ ٱلْاَحْشَآءُ

39. *He*[7] *witnessed her joyful love for his grandson—*
some flames of love set our breasts ablaze!

فَارَقَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَكَانَ لَدَيْهَا
ثَاوِيًا لَا يُمَلُّ مِنْهُ ٱلثَّوَآءُ

40. *She left him with great reluctance; for all the while*
he tarried with her, she never once wearied of his care.

شُقَّ عَنْ قَلْبِهِ وَأُخْرِجَ مِنْهُ
مُضْغَةٌ عِنْدَ غَسْلِهِ سَوْدَاءُ

41. *His chest miraculously rent to reveal his heart,*
wherefrom, while cleansed, a dark spot was purged.

خَتَمَتْهُ يُمْنَى ٱلْأَمِينِ وَقَدْ أُو
دِعَ مَا لَمْ تُذَعْ لَهُ أَنْبَاءُ

42. *The reliable right hand of Gabriel sealed the incision,*
and what was entrusted inside no tidings can convey.

صَانَ أَسْرَارَهُ ٱلْخِتَامُ فَلَا ٱلْفَضْ
ضُ مُلِمٌّ بِهِ وَلَا ٱلْإِفْضَاءُ

43. *That seal safeguarding his secrets could never be*
unsealed, so that nothing might ever be revealed.

أَلِفَ ٱلنُّسْكَ وَٱلْعِبَادَةَ وَٱلْخَلْ
وَةَ طِفْلًا وَهٰكَذَا ٱلنُّجَبَاءُ

44. *As a small child, he found worship, rites, and reclusion*
congenial, and such are habits of the highborn.

وَإِذَا حَلَّتِ ٱلْهِدَايَةُ قَلْبًا
نَشِطَتْ لِلْعِبَادَةِ ٱلْأَعْضَآءُ

45. *Indeed, should divine direction alight upon a heart,*
languid limbs will leap to life, desirous of devotion.

SIGNS PRESAGING A NEW DIVINE MESSAGE

بَعَثَ ٱللَّهُ عِنْدَ مَبْعَثِهِ ٱلشُّهْـ
ـبَ حِرَاسًا وَضَاقَ عَنْهَا ٱلْفَضَآءُ

46. *At his mission's outset, God deployed blazing comets*
to protect the portals and constrict the span of space.

تَطْرُدُ ٱلْجِنَّ عَنْ مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْـ
ـعِ كَمَا تَطْرُدُ ٱلذِّئَابَ ٱلرِّعَآءُ

47. *They dispelled ill spirits from their listening sites,*
just as shepherds from flocks ward off wolves.

فَمَحَتْ آيَةَ ٱلْكَهَانَةِ آيَا
تٌ مِنَ ٱلْوَحْيِ مَا لَهُنَّ ٱنْمِحَآءُ

48. *Thus, divination's design was completely effaced*
by the indelible signs of restorative revelation.

وَرَأَتْهُ خَدِيجَةٌ وَالتُّقَى وَالزُّ
هْدُ فِيهِ سَجِيَّةٌ وَالْحَيَاءُ

49. *Khadījah could see in him his piety, detachment,
and modesty—all natural traits of noble character.*

وَأَتَاهَا أَنَّ الْغَمَامَةَ وَالسَّرْ
حَ أَظَلَّتْهُ مِنْهُمَا أَفْيَاءُ

50. *She heard word that a cloud cover and a lofty tree
had extended their shade and sheltered him,*

وَأَحَادِيثُ أَنَّ وَعْدَ رَسُولِ اللّٰهِ
بِالْبَعْثِ حَانَ مِنْهُ الْوَفَاءُ

51. *And reports that the promise of God's Prophet
and his mission approached its time of pursuance.*

فَدَعَتْهُ إِلَى الزَّوَاجِ وَمَا أَحْـ
سَنَ مَا يَبْلُغُ الْمُنَى الْأَذْكِيَاءُ

52. *She proposed nuptials, and what could be finer
than when the wise realize their sublime desires?*

وَاَتَاهُ فِى بَيْتِهَا جَبْرَئِيلٌ
وَلِذِي ٱللُّبِّ فِى ٱلْأُمُورِ ٱرْتِيَآءُ

53. *When Gabriel visited the Prophet in her home,*
—and a possessor of pith perceives astutely—

فَاَمَاطَتْ عَنْهَا ٱلْخِمَارَ لِتَدْرِي
اَهُوَ ٱلْوَحْيُ اَمْ هُوَ ٱلْإِغْمَآءُ

54. *She quickly set her scarf aside to discover:*
was it revelation or a momentary malady?[8]

فَاخْتَفَى عِنْدَ كَشْفِهَا ٱلرَّأْسَ جِبْرِي
لُ فَمَا عَادَ اَوْ اُعِيدَ ٱلْغِطَآءُ

55. *Her hair now uncovered, Gabriel vanished!*
He would not return till the scarf was restored.

فَاسْتَبَانَتْ خَدِيجَةُ اَنَّهُ ٱلْكَنْ
زُ ٱلَّذِي حَاوَلَتْهُ وَٱلْكِيمِيَآءُ

56. *Khadījah knew then that he was that treasure—*
that alchemy of happiness she had hoped for.

ثُمَّ قَامَ ٱلنَّبِيُّ يَدْعُو إِلَى ٱللّٰهِ
وَفِي ٱلْكُفْرِ نَجْدَةٌ وَإِبَاءُ

57. *The Prophet began inviting others to God's way—*
all the while, disbelievers united in their rejection.

أُمَمًا أُشْرِبَتْ قُلُوبُهُمُ ٱلْكُفْـ
ـرَ فَدَاءُ ٱلضَّلَالِ فِيهِمْ عَيَاءُ

58. *The hearts of whole nations had imbibed disbelief,*
and deviance's disease within them defied treatment.

وَرَأَيْنَا آيَاتِهِ فَٱهْتَدَيْنَا
وَإِذَا ٱلْحَقُّ جَاءَ زَالَ ٱلْمِرَاءُ

59. *We saw his sundry signs and gained guidance,*
for when truth arrives, all debate dissipates.

رَبِّ إِنَّ ٱلْهُدَى هُدَاكَ وَآيَا
تُكَ نُورٌ تَهْدِي بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ

60. *O Lord, all guidance is Your guidance, and Your*
signs a light by which You guide whom You will.

كَمْ رَاَيْنَا مَا لَيْسَ يَعْقِلُ قَدْ اُلْـ
ـهِمَ مَا لَيْسَ يُلْهَمُ ٱلْعُقَلَآءُ

61. *How often we've seen creatures bereft of lofty reason*
realize by inspiration what intellects could not intuit.

اِذْ اَبَى ٱلْفِيلُ مَا اَتَى صَاحِبُ ٱلْفِيـ
ـلِ وَلَمْ يَنْفَعِ ٱلْحِجَا وَٱلذَّكَآءُ

62. *When the elephant refused its master's scheme,*
neither his wit nor his wisdom availed Abrahah.[9]

وَٱلْجَمَادَاتُ اَفْصَحَتْ بِٱلَّذِى اُخْـ
ـرِسَ عَنْهُ لِاَحْمَدَ ٱلْفُصَحَآءُ

63. *Addressing Aḥmad, soulless stones expressed*
that which left even great orators dumbstruck.

وَيْحَ قَوْمٍ جَفَوْا نَبِيًّا بِأَرْضٍ
اَلِفَتْهُ ضِبَابُهَا وَٱلظِّبَآءُ

64. *Woe to a people who shun a prophet in a land*
where even lizards and gazelles reveal their love!

وَسَلَوْهُ وَحَنَّ جِذْعٌ إِلَيْهِ
وَقَلَوْهُ وَوَدَّهُ ٱلْغُرَبَآءُ

65. *People repudiated him, yet palm trees pined for him.*
His own despised him, yet strangers showed him love.

THE PROPHET'S EMIGRATION

أَخْرَجُوهُ مِنْهَا وَآوَاهُ غَارٌ
وَحَمَتْهُ حَمَامَةٌ وَرْقَآءُ

66. *They exiled him from home, yet a cave sheltered him,*
and around that cave, dappled doves defended him.

وَكَفَتْهُ بِنَسْجِهَا عَنْكَبُوتٌ
مَا كَفَتْهُ ٱلْحَمَامَةُ ٱلْحَصْدَآءُ

67. *Even a spider's security—a woven web—sufficed,*
as did the plentiful plumage of those dappled doves.

وَٱخْتَفَى مِنْهُمُ عَلَى قُرْبِ مَرْآ
هُ وَمِنْ شِدَّةِ ٱلظُّهُورِ ٱلْخَفَآءُ

68. *He was hidden in plain sight before their very eyes:*
and sometimes what's most revealed is most concealed.

وَنَحَا ٱلْمُصْطَفَى ٱلْمَدِينَةَ وَٱشْتَا
قَتْ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ مَكَّةَ ٱلْأَنْحَآءُ

69. *The Chosen One set out for the Illuminated City,*
while the environs of Mecca yearned for his return.

وَتَغَنَّتْ بِمَدْحِهِ ٱلْجِنُّ حَتَّى
أَطْرَبَ ٱلْإِنْسَ مِنْهُ ذَاكَ ٱلْغِنَآءُ

70. *Unseen beings sang his praises, such that their*
melodies enraptured the ones who could hear.

وَٱقْتَفَى إِثْرَهُ سُرَاقَةُ فَٱسْتَهْـ
وَتْهُ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ صَافِنٌ جَرْدَآءُ

71. *Surāqah,*[10] *a tracker trailing his traces, suddenly,*
upon his speedy, fine-haired steed, sank in sand.

ثُمَّ نَادَاهُ بَعْدَ مَا سِيمَتِ ٱلْخَسْـ
فَ وَقَدْ يُنْجِدُ ٱلْغَرِيقَ ٱلنِّدَآءُ

72. *He called to the Prophet as the sinkhole circled him,*
and desperate cries sometimes save a drowner.

فَطَوَى ٱلْأَرْضَ سَائِرًا وَٱلسَّمَاوَا
تُ ٱلْعُلَا فَوْقَهَا لَهُ إِسْرَاءُ

73. As the Prophet journeyed on, distances rolled up,
just as the heavens had done so on his Night's Ascent.

THE PROPHET'S NIGHT JOURNEY

فَصِفِ ٱللَّيْلَةَ ٱلَّتِي كَانَ لِلْمُخْ
تَارِ فِيهَا عَلَى ٱلْبُرَاقِ ٱسْتِوَاءُ

74. Describe that momentous night in which Muṣṭafa[11]
alighted felicitously upon the fleet-footed Burāq.[12]

وَتَرَقَّى بِهِۦ إِلَىٰ قَابِ قَوْسَيْـ
نِ وَتِلْكَ ٱلسِّيَادَةُ ٱلْقَعْسَاءُ

75. And it ascended with him until "two bow lengths";[13]
thus, an unmatched mastery was forever fixed.

رُتَبٌ تَسْقُطُ ٱلْأَمَانِيُّ حَسْرَىٰ
دُونَهَا مَا وَرَاءَهُنَّ وَرَاءُ

76. All aspirations fall short of such ranks reached,
for beyond those heights lies no other beyond.

ثُمَّ وَافَىٰ يُحَدِّثُ ٱلنَّاسَ شُكْرًا
اِذْ اَتَتْهُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ٱلنَّعْمَآءُ

77. *Then with gratitude, he conveyed to his people*
the blessings his Lord had bestowed upon him.

وَتَحَدَّىٰ فَٱرْتَابَ كُلُّ مُرِيبٍ
اَوَ يَبْقَىٰ مَعَ ٱلسُّيُولِ ٱلْغُثَآءُ

78. *His challenge to belie him left doubters dumbstruck:*
when floods flow, can flotsam remain in place?

وَهُوَ يَدْعُو اِلَى ٱلْاِلٰهِ وَاِنْ شَقَّ
عَلَيْهِ كُفْرٌ بِهِ وَٱزْدِرَآءُ

79. *He continued to call them to the One True God,*
despite feeling the heft of denial and derision.

وَيَدُلُّ ٱلْوَرَىٰ عَلَى ٱللّٰهِ بِٱلتَّوْ
حِيدِ وَهُوَ ٱلْمَحَجَّةُ ٱلْبَيْضَآءُ

80. *He directed all of humanity to God with a pure*
oneness, wherein lies the wide and well-lit way.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ ٱللهِ لَانَتْ
صَخْرَةٌ مِّنْ إِبَآئِهِمْ صَمَّآءُ

81. *Their stubbornness, akin to an unbreakable boulder,*
was made malleable by his God-garnered grace.

وَٱسْتَجَابَتْ لَهُ بِنَصْرٍ وَفَتْحٍ
بَعْدَ ذَاكَ ٱلْخَضْرَآءُ وَٱلْغَبْرَآءُ

82. *Then, even the heavens above and the earth below*
answered his call with their aegis and openings.

وَأَطَاعَتْ لِأَمْرِهِ ٱلْعَرَبُ ٱلْعَرْ
بَآءُ وَٱلْجَاهِلِيَّةُ ٱلْجَهْلَآءُ

83. *Arabians, pure and distinct, obeyed his command:*
even zealots of the Age of Ignorance surrendered.

وَتَوَالَتْ لِلْمُصْطَفَى ٱلْآيَةُ ٱلْكُبْ
ــــرَى عَلَيْهِمْ وَٱلْغَارَةُ ٱلشَّعْوَاءُ

84. *In succession, one by one, Muṣṭafā's singular signs*
overwhelmed and besieged their beleaguered forces.

وَإِذَا مَا تَلَا كِتَابًا مِنَ ٱللَّهِ
تَلَتْهُ كَتِيبَةٌ خَضْرَآءُ

85. *Upon his recital of this vast Book revealed from God,*
battalions of men followed with weapons aplenty.

THE MOCKERS

وَكَفَاهُ ٱلْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ وَكَمْ سَا
ءَ نَبِيًّا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ ٱسْتِهْزَآءُ

86. *God spared him any malice his mockers intended,*
though many prophets recoiled from scoffers' ridicule!

وَرَمَاهُمْ بِدَعْوَةٍ مِنْ فِنَآءِ ٱلْـ
بَيْتِ فِيهَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ فَنَآءُ

87. *He pelted them with prayers from the courtyard*
of the Kaaba, and thus his oppressors perished.

خَمْسَةٌ كُلُّهُمْ أُصِيبُوا بِدَآءٍ
وَٱلرَّدَىٰ مِنْ جُنُودِهِ ٱلْأَدْوَآءُ

88. *Five scoffers,*[14] *each one of them struck with disease*
and destruction delivered by hosts of the Holy.

فَدَهَى ٱلْاَسْوَدَ بْنَ مُطَّلِبٍ اَيُّ
عَمًى مَيِّتٌ بِهِ ٱلْاَحْيَآءُ

89. *What deadly blinding struck Muṭṭalib's son Aswad,*
such that he was left a dead man among the living.

وَدَهَى ٱلْاَسْوَدَ بْنَ عَبْدِ يَغُوثٍ
اَنْ سَقَاهُ كَاْسَ ٱلرَّدَى ٱسْتِسْقَآءُ

90. *'Abd Yaghūth's son Aswad afflicted with a malady*
inflicted by a draught drawn from a fatal chalice.

وَاَصَابَ ٱلْوَلِيدَ خَدْشَةُ سَهْمٍ
قَصَّرَتْ عَنْهَا ٱلْحَيَّةُ ٱلرَّقْطَآءُ

91. *Walīd laid low by the scratch of an arrowhead,*
of which a speckled pit viper's bite falls short.

وَقَضَتْ شَوْكَةٌ عَلَى مُهْجَةِ ٱلْعَا
صِيْ فَلِلّٰهِ ٱلنَّقْعَةُ ٱلشَّوْكَآءُ

92. *Barely a barb bled dry the heart's blood of al-'Āṣī.*
By God! What a coarse and dreadful death had he!

وَعَلَى ٱلْحَارِثِ ٱلْقُيُوحُ وَقَدْ سَا
لَ بِهَا رَأْسُهُ وَسَآءَ ٱلْوِعَآءُ

93. *As for al-Ḥārith, a festering pus flowed from his*
hateful head—that vessel of unmitigated foulness.

خَمْسَةٌ طُهِّرَتْ بِقَطْعِهِمُ ٱلْأَرْ
ضُ فَكُفُّ ٱلْأَذَىٰ بِهِمْ شَلَّآءُ

94. *The purging of these five purified the earth:*
their harmful hands now justly paralyzed.

فُدِيَتْ خَمْسَةُ ٱلصَّحِيفَةِ بِٱلْخَمْ
سَةِ إِنْ كَانَ لِلْكِرَامِ فِدَآءُ

95. *May these five*[15] *who signed the treaty be ransomed*
by those five—if there be ransom for such nobles;

فِتْيَةٌ بَيَّتُوا عَلَىٰ فِعْلِ خَيْرٍ
حَمِدَ ٱلصُّبْحُ أَمْرَهُمْ وَٱلْمَسَآءُ

96. *These youth spent their nights planning deeds,*
which both the dawn and dusk would extol.

يَا لَأَمْرٍ أَتَاهُ بَعْدَ هِشَامٍ
زَمْعَةٌ إِنَّهُ الْفَتَى الْأَتَّاءُ

97. *What works Zam'ah performed after Hishām—*
that knightly youth in constant care of others.

وَزُهَيْرٌ وَالْمُطْعِمُ بْنُ عَدِيٍّ
وَأَبُو الْبَخْتَرِيِّ مِنْ حَيْثُ شَاؤُوا

98. *He with Zuhayr and al-Muṭ'im bin 'Adī*
and Abū al-Bakhtarī did as they planned:

نَقَضُوا مُبْرَمَ الصَّحِيفَةِ إِذْ شَدَّ
تْ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْعِدَا الْأَنْدَاءُ

99. *They nullified a treaty that was ratified*
and clung to by their clans out of enmity.

أَذْكَرَتْنَا بِأَكْلِهَا أَكْلَ مِنْسَا
ةِ سُلَيْمَانَ الْأَرَضَةُ الْخَرْسَاءُ

100. *But the insects that gnawed away its parchment*
recalled mute termites feasting on Solomon's staff.[16]

وَبِهَا أَخْبَرَ ٱلنَّبِيُّ وَكَمْ أَخْـ
رَجَ خَبْئًا لَهُ ٱلْغُيُوبُ خِبَآءُ

101. *The Prophet foretold the event, and how many*
hidden events the unseen brought forth for him!

THOSE WHO PLOTTED TO KILL THE PROPHET ﷺ

لَا تَخَلْ جَانِبَ ٱلنَّبِيِّ مُضَامًا
حِينَ مَسَّتْهُ مِنْهُمُ ٱلْأَسْوَآءُ

102. *Do not imagine the Prophet's stature diminished*
by visitations upon him of vile and vicious deeds.

كُلُّ أَمْرٍ نَابَ ٱلنَّبِيِّينَ فَٱلشِّدْ
دَةُ فِيهِ مَحْمُودَةٌ وَٱلرَّخَآءُ

103. *All that befalls the prophets, be it hardship or ease,*
only reveals their virtues and meritorious qualities.

لَوْ يَمَسُّ ٱلنُّضَارَ هُونٌ مِنَ ٱلنَّا
رِ لَمَا ٱخْتِيرَ لِلنُّضَارِ ٱلصِّلَآءُ

104. *If pure gold was ever diminished by the flames of fire,*
the thought of smelting it would never have arisen.

كَمْ يَدٍ عَنْ نَبِيِّهِ كَفَّهَا اللّٰهُ
وَفِي الْخَلْقِ كَثْرَةٌ وَاجْتِرَاءُ

105. *How many hands God held back from harming*
His Prophet, and such men are many and bold!

إِذْ دَعَا وَحْدَهُ الْعِبَادَ وَأَمْسَتْ
مِنْهُ فِي كُلِّ مُقْلَةٍ أَقْذَاءُ

106. *Without aid, alone, he called God's callous servants,*
yet the result was like a mote in their myopic eyes.

هَمَّ قَوْمٌ بِقَتْلِهِ فَأَبَى السَّيْـ
ـفُ وَفَاءً وَفَاءَتِ الصَّفْوَاءُ

107. *A group sought to slay him, but the loyal sword*
spurned their plots, and rocks boomeranged back.

وَأَبُو جَهْلٍ إِذْ رَأَى عُنُقَ الْفَحْـ
ـلِ إِلَيْهِ كَأَنَّهُ الْعَنْقَاءُ

108. *Abū Jahl, too, saw the colossal camel's long neck*
loom over him as if it was the grievous griffin.[17]

وَٱقْتَضَاهُ ٱلنَّبِيُّ دَيْنَ ٱلْإِرَاشِيِّ
وَقَدْ سَآءَ بَيْعُهُ وَٱلشِّرَآءُ

109. *The Prophet admonished him to fulfill his debt owed*
to al-Irāshī[18] *from the corrupt commerce conducted.*

وَرَأَىٰ ٱلْمُصْطَفَىٰ أَتَاهُ بِمَا لَمْ
يَنْجُ مِنْهُ دُونَ ٱلْوَفَاءِ ٱلنَّجَآءُ

110. *He surmised that Muṣṭafā made him an offer,*
compliance with which could secure his safety.

هُوَ مَا قَدْ رَآهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَٰكِنْ
مَا عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ يُعَدُّ ٱلْخَطَآءُ

111. *To no avail, since he had seen the camel already;*
indeed, such a man's sins cannot be counted.

وَأَعَدَّتْ حَمَّالَةُ ٱلْحَطَبِ ٱلْفِهْـ
ـرَ وَجَآءَتْ كَأَنَّهَا ٱلْوَرْقَآءُ

112. *Readied with rock to strike, the firewood carrier*[19]
came strutting as if she were a puffed-up pigeon;

يَوْمَ جَآءَتْ غِضْبَى تَقُولُ أَفِى مِثْـ
لِى مِنْ أَحْمَدٍ يُقَالُ ٱلْهِجَآءُ

113. *Filled with unruly rage, on that day she prattled:*
"Must someone like me suffer insults from Aḥmad?"

وَتَوَلَّتْ وَمَا رَأَتْهُ وَمِنْ أَيْـ
نَ تَرَى ٱلشَّمْسَ مُقْلَةٌ عَمْيَآءُ

114. *Then she turned and left; for her, no sight of him;*
how could blind eyes behold the sun's splendor?

ثُمَّ سَمَّتْ لَهُ ٱلْيَهُودِيَّةُ ٱلشَّا
ةَ وَكَمْ سَامَ ٱلشِّقْوَةَ ٱلْأَشْقِيَآءُ

115. *Later a Jewish woman proffered poisoned mutton;*
often wretched ones wreak havoc on themselves!

فَأَذَاعَ ٱلذِّرَاعُ مَا فِيهِ مِنْ شَرٍّ
بِنُطْقٍ إِخْفَآؤُهُ إِبْدَآءُ

116. *The foreshank revealed the evil that lay within it,*
with speech concealed, yet to him all was revealed.

وَبِخُلُقٍ مِنَ ٱلنَّبِيِّ كَرِيمٍ
لَمْ تُقَاصَصْ بِجَرْحِهَا ٱلْعَجْمَآءُ

117. *Due to the Prophet's ethereal ethics and nobility,*
he meted out no retribution for her callous crime.[20]

مَنَّ فَضْلًا عَلَى هَوَازِنَ إِذْ كَا
نَ لَهُ قَبْلَ ذَاكَ فِيهِمْ رَبَاءُ

118. *He showed the clan of Hawāzin much graciousness,*
for, in infancy, much he received of their rearing.[21]

وَأَتَى ٱلسَّبْيُ فِيهِ أُخْتُ رَضَاعٍ
وَضَعَ ٱلْكُفْرُ قَدْرَهَا وَٱلسِّبَآءُ

119. *Their captives came, among them his milk sister,*
now of low status, being a hostage yet to believe;

فَحَبَاهَا بِرًّا تَوَهَّمَتِ ٱلنَّا
سُ بِهِ أَنَّمَا ٱلسِّبَآءُ هِدَآءُ

120. *With fraternal affection, he displayed such partiality,*
their captive ladies seemed a procession of her bridesmaids.

بَسَطَ ٱلْمُصْطَفَىٰ لَهَا مِنْ رِدَآءٍ
أَىَّ فَضْلٍ حَوَاهُ ذَاكَ ٱلرِّدَآءُ

121. *Muṣṭafā spread his shawl for Shaymā', his milk sister—*
and what distinction that cloth contained as his cover!

فَغَدَتْ فِيهِ وَهْىَ سَيِّدَةُ ٱلنِّسْـ
ـوَةِ وَٱلسَّيِّدَاتُ فِيهِ إِمَآءُ

122. *She became a lady among her clan's womenfolk,*
as if all the clan's ladies were made her bondmaids.

THE PROPHET'S CHARACTER AND FEATURES

فَتَنَزَّهْ فِى ذَاتِهِ وَمَعَانِيـ
ـهِ ٱسْتِمَاعًا إِنْ عَزَّ مِنْهَا ٱجْتِلَآءُ

123. *Revel in the delight of his replete and pure essence,*
giving attentive ear to qualities now sorely missed.

وَٱمْلَإِ ٱلسَّمْعَ مِنْ مَحَاسِنَ يُمْلِيـ
ـهَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْإِنْشَادُ وَٱلْإِنْشَآءُ

124. *Fill your ears with the beauty of his virtues*
recited to you in a regale of poetry and prose.

كُلُّ وَصْفٍ لَهُ ٱبْتَدَأْتَ بِهِ ٱسْتَوْ
عَبَ اَخْبَارَ ٱلْفَضْلِ مِنْهُ ٱبْتِدَآءُ

125. *Any description of his virtue that one recounts*
will encompass all his virtues from the outset.

سَيِّدٌ ضِحْكُهُ ٱلتَّبَسُّمُ وَٱلْمَشْ
يُ ٱلْهُوَيْنَا وَنَوْمُهُ ٱلْإِغْفَآءُ

126. *Our master—his laughter, a slight and subtle smile,*
his gait courtly and composed, and his sleep a mere doze.

مَا سِوَى خُلْقِهِ ٱلنَّسِيمُ وَلَا غَيْ
رُ مُحَيَّاهُ ٱلرَّوْضَةُ ٱلْغَنَّآءُ

127. *His character comparable to a cool breeze;*
his countenance akin to gardens in bloom,

رَحْمَةٌ كُلُّهُ وَحَزْمٌ وَعَزْمٌ
وَوَقَارٌ وَعِصْمَةٌ وَحَيَآءُ

128. *An essence of mercy, discernment, and resolve,*
with perfect poise, impeccancy, and propriety;

لَا تَحُلُّ ٱلْبَأْسَآءُ مِنْهُ عُرَى ٱلصَّبْـ
ـرِ وَلَا تَسْتَخِفُّهُ ٱلسَّرَّآءُ

129. *Hard times never perturbed his holy patience;*
no carefree moments unsettled his solemnity;

كَرُمَتْ نَفْسُهُ فَمَا يَخْطُرُ ٱلسُّوٓ
ءُ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهِ وَلَا ٱلْفَحْشَآءُ

130. *Such a sublime soul that thoughts of foulness*
or indecency never profaned his pure heart;

عَظُمَتْ نِعْمَةُ ٱلْإِلَـٰهِ عَلَيْهِ
فَٱسْتَقَلَّتْ لِذِكْرِهِ ٱلْعُظَمَآءُ

131. *So varied and vast were God's blessings on him,*
to mention him diminishes the weight of greats.

جَهِلَتْ قَوْمُهُ عَلَيْهِ فَأَغْضَىٰ
وَأَخُو ٱلْحِلْمِ دَأْبُهُ ٱلْإِغْضَآءُ

132. *The callousness his people showed he ignored—*
and one filled with forbearance forgoes revenge.

وَسِعَ ٱلْعَالَمِينَ عِلْمًا وَحِلْمًا
فَهْوَ بَحْرٌ لَمْ تُعْيِهِ ٱلْأَعْبَاءُ

133. *He contained a cosmos of knowledge and fortitude;*
he was an ocean the world's weight never wearied.

مُسْتَقِلٌّ دُنْيَاكَ اَنْ يُنْسَبَ ٱلْإِمْ
سَاكُ مِنْهَا اِلَيْهِ وَٱلْإِعْطَاءُ

134. *So trifling did he deem this temporal world that*
to ascribe withholding or gifting it seems amiss.

شَمْسُ فَضْلٍ تَحَقَّقَ ٱلظَّنُّ فِيهِ
اَنَّهُ ٱلشَّمْسُ رِفْعَةً وَٱلضِّيَاءُ

135. *He is virtue's solar star, a view true and verified;*
he is the sun's zenith and its light's brilliance.

فَإِذَا مَا ضَحَا مَحَا نُورُهُ ٱلظِّلَّ
وَقَدْ اَثْبَتَ ٱلظِّلَالَ ٱلضَّحَاءُ

136. *When he set out in sunlight, his light would dispel*
any shadows the forenoon sunlight had cast,

فَكَأَنَّ ٱلْغَمَامَةَ ٱسْتَوْدَعَتْهُ
مَنْ أَظَلَّتْ مِنْ ظِلِّهِ ٱلدُّفَفَآءُ

137. *As if clouds, in his youth, that shaded him from harm*
knew one day his shade would protect entire armies.

خَفِيَتْ عِنْدَهُ ٱلْفَضَآئِلُ وَٱنْجَا
بَتْ بِهِ عَنْ عُقُولِنَا ٱلْأَهْوَآءُ

138. *Due to his character, the virtues of others dimmed;*
and his grace freed our minds of fanciful desires.

أَمَعَ ٱلصُّبْحِ لِلنُّجُومِ تَجَلٍّ
أَمْ مَعَ ٱلشَّمْسِ لِلظَّلَامِ بَقَآءُ

139. *If daylight breaks, can stars still be seen?*
At Lahaina Noon,[22] do shadows remain?

مُعْجِزُ ٱلْقَوْلِ وَٱلْفَعَالِ كَرِيمُ ٱلْ
خَلْقِ وَٱلْخُلْقِ مُقْسِطٌ مِعْطَآءُ

140. *Wondrous in words and virtuous deeds, generous*
and noble in form and content, just and charitable—

لَا تَقِسْ بِٱلنَّبِيِّ فِي ٱلْفَضْلِ خَلْقًا
فَهُوَ ٱلْبَحْرُ وَٱلْأَنَامُ إِضَآءُ

141. *Measure not the Prophet's merits by other men's:*
he is a boundless ocean, they barely even puddles.

كُلُّ فَضْلٍ فِي ٱلْعَالَمِينَ فَمِنْ فَضْـ
لِ ٱلنَّبِيِّ ٱسْتَعَارَهُ ٱلْفُضَلَآءُ

142. *All the virtues that inhere in this world of ours*
the virtuous only borrowed from the Prophet.

THE PROPHET'S SPLITTING OF THE MOON AND OTHER MIRACLES

شُقَّ عَنْ صَدْرِهِ وَشُقَّ لَهُ ٱلْبَدْ
رُ وَمِنْ شَرْطِ كُلِّ شَرْطٍ جَزَآءُ

143. *His chest was rent and the moon rent asunder for him;*
and any incision is conditioned upon recompense.[23]

وَرَمَى بِٱلْحَصَى فَأَقْصَدَ جَيْشًا
مَا ٱلْعَصَا عِنْدَهُ وَمَا ٱلْإِلْقَآءُ

144. *He threw pebbles that pulverized whole armies:*
with no staff of Moses, or even a challenge to throw.

وَدَعَا لِلْأَنَامِ اِذْ دَهِمَتْهُمْ
سَنَةٌ مِنْ مُحُولِهَا شَهْبَاءُ

145. *When a deathly drought descended on them,*
all foliage dried up, so he prayed for his people.

فَٱسْتَهَلَّتْ بِٱلْغَيْثِ سَبْعَةَ اَيَّا
مٍ عَلَيْهِمْ سَحَابَةٌ وَطْفَاءُ

146. *And then a cloud-filled sky poured forth,*
flooding all and sundry for seven full days.

تَتَحَرَّى مَوَاضِعَ ٱلرَّعْيِ وَٱلسَّقْ
يِ وَحَيْثُ ٱلْعِطَاشُ تُوهَى ٱلسِّقَاءُ

147. *Downpours sought out fodder, foliage, waterways,*
and places where parched vessels of the thirsting lay.

وَاَتَى ٱلنَّاسُ يَشْتَكُونَ اَذَاهَا
وَرَخَاءٌ يُؤْذِي ٱلْاَنَامَ غَلَاءُ

148. *Then, they complained of being ravaged by rain,*
as downpours sometimes inundate and devastate.

فَدَعَا فَانْجَلَى ٱلْغَمَامُ فَقُلْ فِي
وَصْفِ غَيْثٍ إِقْلَاعُهُ ٱسْتِسْقَاءُ

149. *He prayed, and soon the clouds cleared away:*
so tell the tale of a deluge reined in by a rain prayer!

ثُمَّ أَثْرَى ٱلثَّرَىٰ فَقَرَّتْ عُيُونٌ
بِقُرَاهَا وَأُحْيِيَتْ أَحْيَاءُ

150. *The earth flushed with fecundity as watchers*
from villages rejoiced as their environs revived.

فَتَرَى ٱلْأَرْضَ غِبَّهُ كَسَمَاءٍ
أَشْرَقَتْ مِنْ نُجُومِهَا ٱلظَّلْمَاءُ

151. *You could see clearly the newly watered land;*
like the night sky whose stars dispel darkness,

تُخْجِلُ ٱلدُّرَّ وَٱلْيَوَاقِيتَ مِنْ نَوْ
رِ رُبَاهَا ٱلْبَيْضَاءُ وَٱلْحَمْرَاءُ

152. *On hilltops, white and red flowers in full bloom*
would make blanched pearls and red rubies blush.

لَيْتَهُ خَصَّنِي بِرُؤْيَةِ وَجْهٍ
زَالَ عَنْ كُلِّ مَنْ رَآهُ الشَّقَاءُ

153. *Would that God grant me visions of his visage,*
of which the sight dispels despondency or despair—

مُسْفِرٍ يَلْتَقِي الْكَتِيبَةَ بَسَّا
مًا إِذَا أَسْهَمَ الْوُجُوهَ اللِّقَاءُ

154. *He would meet his enemies smiling and composed,*
where others would have waxed white with dread.

جُعِلَتْ مَسْجِدًا لَهُ الْأَرْضُ فَاهْتَزَّ
بِهِ لِلصَّلَاةِ فِيهَا حِرَاءُ

155. *The whole earth was made a mosque for him;*
Ḥirā' tremored[24] as he stood upon her in prayer.

مُظْهِرٍ شَجَّةَ الْجَبِينِ عَلَى الْبُرْ
ءِ كَمَا أَظْهَرَ الْهِلَالَ الْبَرَاءُ

156. *His face revealed his brow's healed wound,*
as a crescent reveals the month's new moon.[25]

سُتِرَ ٱلْحُسْنُ مِنْهُ بِٱلْحُسْنِ فَٱعْجَبْ
لِجَمَالٍ لَهُ ٱلْجَمَالُ وِقَآءُ

157. *His original beauty veiled by a scar's allure:*
so marvel at beauty secreted by loveliness,

فَهْوَ كَٱلزَّهْرِ لَاحَ مِنْ سَجَفِ ٱلْأَكْـ
ـمَامِ وَٱلْعُودِ شُقَّ عَنْهُ ٱللِّحَآءُ

158. *Like a bud blooming beneath petal's sepal,*
or aloes' oil seeping from a tree's split bark.

كَادَ اَنْ يُغْشِيَ ٱلْعُيُونَ سَنًا مِنْـ
ـهُ لِسِرٍّ فِيهِ حَكَتْهُ ذُكَآءُ

159. *Our eyes almost blinded from his radiance*
through his secret akin to the sun's splendor,

صَانَهُ ٱلْحُسْنُ وَٱلسَّكِينَةُ اَنْ تُظْـ
ـهَرَ فِيهِ آثَارُهَا ٱلْبَأْسَآءُ

160. *His serenity and calm guarded him well,*
so that troubles left no traces upon him.

وَتَخَالُ ٱلْوُجُوهَ إِنْ قَابَلَتْهُ
أَلْبَسَتْهَا أَلْوَانَهَا ٱلْحِرْبَاءُ

161. *Imagine those flushed faces turning to face him,*
as if a chameleon had clothed them in its colors.

فَإِذَا شِمْتَ بِشْرَهُ وَنَدَاهُ
أَذْهَلَتْكَ ٱلْأَنْوَارُ وَٱلْأَنْوَاءُ

162. *If you could only see his good cheer and charity,*
its lights and his stellar deeds would dazzle you.

THE PROPHET'S MIRACULOUS HANDS AND FEET

أَوْ بِتَقْبِيلِ رَاحَةٍ كَانَ لِلَّهِ
وَبِٱللَّهِ أَخْذُهَا وَٱلْعَطَاءُ

163. *O to kiss that hand that lived only for God,*
whose giving and taking was for God alone,

تَتَّقِي بَأْسَهَا ٱلْمُلُوكُ وَتَحْظَى
بِٱلْغِنَى مِنْ نَوَالِهَا ٱلْفُقَرَاءُ

164. *A hand whose might made monarchs tremble,*
whose munificence made paupers prosper!

لَا تَسَلْ سَيْلَ جُودِهَا إِنَّمَا يَكْـ
ـفِيكَ مِنْ وَكْفِ سُحْبِهَا ٱلْأَنْدَآءُ

165. Ask not how its stream bestowed so much:
even droplets of its nimbus were enough!

دَرَّتِ ٱلشَّاةُ حِينَ مَرَّتْ عَلَيْهَا
فَلَهَا ثَرْوَةٌ بِهَا وَنَمَآءُ

166. A ewe's udder flowed, as his palm passed over it,
producing much milk with a constant stream.

نَبَعَ ٱلْمَآءُ أَثْمَرَ ٱلنَّخْلُ فِي عَا
مٍ بِهَا سَبَّحَتْ بِهَا ٱلْحَصْبَآءُ

167. Water flowed from his fingers, date palms fruited
in a year, and pebbles praised God in his palms—

أَحْيَتِ ٱلْمُرْمِلِينَ مِنْ مَوْتِ جَهْدٍ
أَعْوَزَ ٱلْقَوْمَ فِيهِ زَادٌ وَمَآءُ

168. A hand that revived men in mortal danger,
a people in need of even wheat and water;

فَتَغَذَّىٰ بِٱلصَّاعِ اَلْفٌ جِيَاعٌ
وَتَرَوَّىٰ بِٱلصَّاعِ اَلْفٌ ظِمَآءُ

169. *A hand whose handfuls fed a famished thousand,*
and with a little water slaked a parched chiliad;

وَوَفَىٰ قَدْرُ بَيْضَةٍ مِنْ نُضَارٍ
دَيْنَ سَلْمَانَ حِينَ حَانَ ٱلْوَفَآءُ

170. *A hand that freed the Persian's*[26] *debt, handing him*
an egg's weight of gold when the settlement fell due.

كَانَ يُدْعَىٰ قِنًّا فَاُعْتِقَ لَمَّا
اَيْنَعَتْ مِنْ نَخِيلِهِ ٱلْاَقْنَآءُ

171. *Salmān, wrongfully enslaved, became emancipated*
when an orchard of date palms fruited its branches.

اَفَلَا تَعْذُرُونَ سَلْمَانَ لَمَّا
اَنْ عَرَتْهُ مِنْ ذِكْرِهِ ٱلْعُرَوَآءُ

172. *Won't you excuse Salmān for feeling feverish*
and falling ill on hearing the Prophet's name?

وَاَزَالَتْ بِلَمْسِهَا كُلَّ دَآءٍ
اَكْبَرَتْهُ اَطِبَّةٌ وَاِسَآءُ

173. *His mere touch removed every malady*
that mystified medics and the ailing alike;

وَعُيُونٌ مَرَّتْ بِهَا وَهْىَ رُمْدٌ
فَاَرَتْهَا مَا لَمْ تَرَ ٱلزَّرْقَآءُ

174. *Any inflamed eye his hand passed over*
could see what Zarqa'[27] could not espy;

وَاَعَادَتْ عَلَىٰ قَتَادَةَ عَيْنًا
فَهْىَ حَتَّىٰ مَمَاتِهِ ٱلنَّجْلَآءُ

175. *His hand restored Qatādah's injured eye:*
his vision until death was clear and keen.[28]

اَوْ بِلَثْمِ ٱلتُّرَابِ مِنْ قَدَمٍ لَا
نَتْ حَيَآءً مِنْ مَشْيِهَا ٱلصَّفْوَآءُ

176. *O to bestow a kiss on the dust beneath his foot,*
whose tread hard rock for him softened humbly.

مَوْطِئِ ٱلْأَخْمَصِ ٱلَّذِى مِنْهُ لِلْقَلْـ
ـبِ إِذَا مَضْجَعِى أَقَضَّ وِطَآءُ

177. *Would that the dust his sole's arch pressed upon*
was for my side the bed's dust my soul settled on.

حَظِىَ ٱلْمَسْجِدُ ٱلْحَرَامُ بِمَمْشَا
هَا وَلَمْ يَنْسَ حَظَّهُ إِيلِيَآءُ

178. *The Sanctuary enjoyed the traces of his feet, and*
Jerusalem forgot not her portion of his footsteps.

وَرِمَتْ إِذْ رَمَىٰ بِهَا ظُلَمَ ٱللَّيْـ
ـلِ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ خَوْفُهُ وَٱلرَّجَآءُ

179. *His feet swelled, piercing the night in prayer,*
his hopes and fears centered on God alone.

دَمِيَتْ فِى ٱلْوَغَىٰ لِتُكْسِبَ طِيبًا
مَا أَرَاقَتْ مِنَ ٱلدَّمِ ٱلشُّهَدَآءُ

180. *They bled in the fray of battle, so they might gain*
the fragrant scent of a martyr's blessed blood,[29]

فَهْيَ قُطْبُ ٱلْمِحْرَابِ وَٱلْحَرْبِ كَمْ دَا
رَتْ عَلَيْهَا فِي طَاعَةٍ أَرْحَآءُ

181. *His feet the focus of prayer niches and battle pitches—*
and how many clans circled them in devoted duty!

وَأُرَاهُ لَوْ لَمْ يُسَكِّنْ بِهَا قَبْ
لُ حِرَآءً مَاجَتْ بِهِ ٱلدَّأْمَآءُ

182. *I surmise that had his foot not stilled Mount*
Ḥirā', to this day, she would still be swaying.

عَجَبًا لِلْكُفَّارِ زَادُوا ضَلَالًا
بِٱلَّذِي فِيهِ لِلْعُقُولِ ٱهْتِدَآءُ

183. *Marvel at scoffers whose deviance redoubles*
from proofs whereby intellects find guidance!

وَٱلَّذِي يَسْأَلُونَ مِنْهُ كِتَابٌ
مُنْزَلٌ قَدْ أَتَاهُمُ وَٱرْتِقَآءُ

184. *Those who asked him for a Book to descend*
had it already, not to mention his Ascension.

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ ذِكْرٌ
فِيهِ لِلنَّاسِ رَحْمَةٌ وَشِفَاءُ

185. *Isn't a reminder from God enough for them,*
infused with mercy and mankind's medicine,

أَعْجَزَ ٱلْإِنْسَ آيَةً مِنْهُ وَٱلْجِنْ
نَ فَهَلَّا تَأْتِي بِهَا ٱلْبُلَغَاءُ

186. *Whose signs incapacitated both men and djinn?*
So why couldn't any of their orators match it?

كُلَّ يَوْمٍ تُهْدِي إِلَىٰ سَامِعِيهِ
مُعْجِزَاتٍ مِنْ لَفْظِهِ ٱلْقُرَّاءُ

187. *Every day, chanters gift to those who listen well*
the many wonders of its sounds and syllables.

تَتَحَلَّىٰ بِهِ ٱلْمَسَامِعُ وَٱلْأَفْـ
ـوَاهُ فَهُوَ ٱلْحُلِيُّ وَٱلْحَلْوَاءُ

188. *Mouths sweetened and ears adorned by its recital,*
it is the ears' ornaments and the tongue's delight.

رَقَّ لَفْظاً وَرَاقَ مَعْنىً فَجَاءَتْ
فِي حُلاَهَا وَحِلْيِهَا الْخَنْسَاءُ

189. *Subtle in its sound and marvelous in its meaning,*
as if al-Khansā'[30] *came adorned in all her comeliness.*

وَأَرَتْنَا فِيهِ غَوَامِضَ فَضْلٍ
رِقَّةٌ مِنْ زُلاَلِهِ وَصَفَاءُ

190. *Its fineness shows us its rarefied bounties,*
its waterlike sweetness, coolness, and pellucidity.

إِنَّمَا تُجْتَلَى الْوُجُوهُ إِذَا مَا
جُلِيَتْ عَنْ مِرْآتِهَا الْأَصْدَاءُ

191. *Only polished mirrors whose rust is removed*
reflect and reveal the faces that gaze in them.

سُوَرٌ مِنْهُ أَشْبَهَتْ صُوَراً مِنَّـ
ـا وَمِثْلُ النَّظَائِرِ النُّظَرَاءُ

192. *Each of its chapters seems alike in form, as we all do;*
and, like us, each has its unique virtues and graces.

وَٱلْأَقَاوِيلُ عِنْدَهُمْ كَالتَّمَاثِيـ
ـلِ فَلَا يُوهِمَنَّكَ ٱلْخُطَبَاءُ

193. Their idle invectives against it resemble idols,
so don't let their eloquent sophists deceive you.

كَمْ اَبَانَتْ آيَاتُهُ مِنْ عُلُومٍ
عَنْ حُرُوفٍ اَبَانَ عَنْهَا ٱلْهِجَاءُ

194. How many arts and sciences its signs elucidated
with letters literally distinguished by an alphabet!

فَهْيَ كَٱلْحَبِّ وَٱلنَّوَى اَعْجَبَ ٱلزُّرَّ
اعَ مِنْهَا سَنَابِلٌ وَزَكَاءُ

195. The letters like grains and seeds astonish sowers
once they see the growth of its ears and spikes.

فَاَطَالُوا فِيهِ ٱلتَّرَدُّدَ وَٱلرَّيْـ
ـبَ فَقَالُوا سِحْرٌ وَقَالُوا ٱفْتِرَاءُ

196. Yet they persisted in distrust and hesitation:
"Sorcery!" they said, declaring it a fabrication.

وَاِذَا ٱلْبَيِّنَاتُ لَمْ تُغْنِ شَيْـًٔا
فَٱلْتِمَاسُ ٱلْهُدَىٰ بِهِنَّ عَنَآءُ

197. *Since clear and compelling proofs avail not one iota,*
seeking faith in such proofs seems a pointless pursuit.

وَاِذَا ضَلَّتِ ٱلْعُقُولُ عَلَىٰ عِلْـ
ـمٍ فَمَاذَا تَقُولُهُ ٱلنُّصَحَآءُ

198. *When intellects wander despite their knowledge,*
what then is left for sincere advisors to convey?

REFUTING THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

قَوْمَ عِيسَىٰ عَامَلْتُمُ قَوْمَ مُوسَىٰ
بِٱلَّذِى عَامَلَتْكُمُ ٱلْحُنَفَآءُ

199. *O people of Jesus, you regarded Moses's followers*
just as the truth-seeking believers regarded you.

صَدَّقُوا كُتْبَكُمْ وَكَذَّبْتُمْ كُتْـ
ـبَهُمُ اِنَّ ذَا لَبِئْسَ ٱلْبَوَآءُ

200. *While Christians believed your revelation, O Judaists,*[31]
you refuted theirs; indeed, what a woeful requital!

لَوْ جَحَدْنَا جُحُودَكُمْ لَٱسْتَوَيْنَا
اَوَلِلْحَقِّ بِٱلضَّلَالِ ٱسْتِوَآءُ

201. *Had we repudiated your revelation, as you did ours,*
we'd be the same; can truth and error be the same?

مَا لَكُمْ اِخْوَةَ ٱلْكِتَابِ أُنَاسًا
لَيْسَ يُرْعَىٰ لِلْحَقِّ مِنْكُمْ اِخَآءُ

202. *Brethren of the Bible, what's become of you two?*
Doesn't the right of brotherhood rely on respect?

يَحْسُدُ ٱلْأَوَّلُ ٱلْأَخِيرَ وَمَا زَا
لَ كَذَا ٱلْمُحْدَثُونَ وَٱلْقُدَمَآءُ

203. *The first usually envies the one who comes last,*
as those present also resemble those past.

قَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ بِظُلْمِ قَابِيلَ هَابِيـ
ـلَ وَمَظْلُومُ ٱلْإِخْوَةِ ٱلْأَتْقِيَآءُ

204. *You know of how Cain wronged his brother, Abel;*
and the wronged brother is often the pious one.

وَسَمِعْتُمْ بِكَيْدِ اَبْنَآءِ يَعْقُو
بَ اَخَاهُمْ وَكُلُّهُمْ صُلَحَآءُ

205. *You have heard of the schemes of Jacob's sons*
against their brother—and yet all were righteous—

حِينَ اَلْقَوْهُ فِي غَيَابَةِ جُبٍّ
وَرَمَوْهُ بِٱلْاِفْكِ وَهْوَ بَرَآءُ

206. *When they plunged him into the depths of a well*
and slung lies against one untainted and pure.

فَتَاَسَّوْا بِمَنْ مَضَى اِذْ ظُلِمْتُمْ
فَٱلتَّاَسِّى لِلنَّفْسِ فِيهِ عَزَآءُ

207. *So when wronged, take heart in their stories past;*
for souls that seek solace find consolation there.

اَتُرَاكُمْ وَفَيْتُمْ حِينَ خَانُوا
اَمْ تُرَاكُمْ اَحْسَنْتُمُ اِذْ اَسَآؤُوا

208. *Do you deem yourselves pious and them perfidious,*
and you virtuous in the face of their viciousness?

بَلْ تَمَادَتْ عَلَى ٱلتَّجَاهُلِ آبَا
ءٌ تَقَفَّتْ آثَارَهَا ٱلْأَبْنَاءُ

209. *Rather, parents persisted in feigned ignorance,*
and children simply followed in their footsteps.

بَيَّنَتْهُ تَوْرَاتُهُمْ وَٱلْأَنَاجِيـ
ـلُ وَهُمْ فِي جُحُودِهِ شُرَكَاءُ

210. *Though their Torah and Gospel clearly avowed him,*
they partnered in their disavowal and denial.

إِنْ تَقُولُوا مَا بَيَّنَتْهُ فَمَا زَا
لَتْ بِهَا عَنْ عُيُونِهِمْ غَشْوَاءُ

211. *If they claim their scriptures did not proclaim him,*
it stems from an ongoing opaqueness in their eyes.

أَوْ تَقُولُوا قَدْ بَيَّنَتْهُ فَمَا لِلْـ
أُذْنِ عَمَّا تَقُولُهُ صَمَّاءُ

212. *Or if they say their scriptures declare him well,*
why then are their ears deaf to what the Books tell?

عَرَفُوهُ وَاَنْكَرُوهُ وَظُلْمًا
كَتَمَتْهُ ٱلشَّهَادَةَ ٱلشُّهَدَآءُ

213. *They knew him and yet rejected him wrongfully;
their witnesses chose to conceal their testimony.*

اَوَ نُورُ ٱلْإِلٰهِ تُطْفِئُهُ ٱلْأَفْ
وَاهُ وَهْوَ ٱلَّذِى بِهِ يُسْتَضَآءُ

214. *Can the light of God be doused by mere mouths,
when that light is the means that enables all sight?*

اَوَلَا يُنْكِرُونَ مَنْ طَحَنَتْهُمْ
بِرَحَاهَا عَنْ اَمْرِهِ ٱلْهَيْجَآءُ

215. *Will they continue to deny one whose martial
mandate, like a millstone, ground them down?*

وَكَسَاهُمْ ثَوْبَ ٱلصَّغَارِ وَقَدْ طُلَّ
تْ دِمَآءٌ مِنْهُمْ وَصِيْنَتْ دِمَآءُ

216. *He dressed them in a garment of disgrace—blood spilt
from some, while others were spared its spillage.*

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي ٱلْإِلَٰهُ مِنْهُمْ قُلُوبًا
حَشْوُهَا مِنْ حَبِيبِهِ ٱلْبَغْضَآءُ

217. *How could the divine incline them to truth—*
hearts laden with loathing of God's beloved?

REFUTING CHRISTIANS AND JUDAISTS

خَبِّرُونَا أَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَابَيْنِ مِنْ أَيْ
نَ أَتَاكُمْ تَثْلِيثُكُمْ وَٱلْبَدَآءُ

218. *Tell us then, O people of these two sacred Books,*
whence the Trinity or a Mitzvot's immutability?[32]

مَآ أَتَى بِٱلْعَقِيدَتَيْنِ كِتَابٌ
وَٱعْتِقَادٌ لَا نَصَّ فِيهِ ٱدِّعَآءُ

219. *Neither Book brought these two doctrines:*
so tenets without proof remain baseless claims.

وَٱلدَّعَاوَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُقِيمُوا عَلَيْهَا
بَيِّنَاتٍ أَبْنَآؤُهَا أَدْعِيَآءُ

220. *And claims—if you can't produce any compelling*
proofs—are like bastards with claims of parentage.

لَيْتَ شِعْرِي ذِكْرُ ٱلثَّلَاثَةِ وَٱلْوَا
حِدِ نَقْصٌ فِي عَدِّكُمْ أَمْ نَمَآءُ

221. *Would that I knew if this talk of three and one*
rendered your reckoning subtraction or addition!

كَيْفَ وَحَّدْتُمُ إِلٰهًا نَفَى ٱلتَّوْ
حِيدَ عَنْهُ ٱلْآبَآءُ وَٱلْأَبْنَآءُ

222. *How can you declare the singularity of God when*
one generation after another negates oneness?

أَإِلٰهٌ مُرَكَّبٌ مَا سَمِعْنَا
بِإِلٰهٍ لِذَاتِهِ أَجْزَآءُ

223. *A composite deity! We never heard of a god*
whose essence is composite or complex!

أَلِكُلٍّ مِنْهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِنَ ٱلْمُلْ
كِ فَهَلَّا تَمَيَّزَ ٱلْأَنْصِبَآءُ

224. *Does each of them possess a portion of dominion?*
Why then doesn't each show its distinction apart?

أَتَرَاهُمْ لِحَاجَةٍ وَٱضْطِرَارٍ
خَلَطُوهَا وَمَا بَغَى ٱلْخُلَطَاءُ

225. If so, do you think they have needs or necessities
to mix their parts, and yet they don't transgress?

أَهُوَ ٱلرَّاكِبُ ٱلْحِمَارَ فَيَا عَجْ
زَ إِلَٰهٍ يَمَسُّهُ ٱلْإِعْيَاءُ

226. Was the godhead riding on the donkey? If so,
how helpless is a god who wearies from a walk!

أَمْ جَمِيعٌ عَلَى ٱلْحِمَارِ لَقَدْ جَلَّ
حِمَارٌ بِجَمْعِهِمْ مَشَّاءُ

227. Or were all three on the donkey? What a mighty
ass that moved so well when bearing them all!

أَمْ سِوَاهُمْ هُوَ ٱلْإِلَٰهُ فَمَا نِسْ
بَةُ عِيسَى إِلَيْهِ وَٱلْإِنْتِمَاءُ

228. Or is someone other than those three God?
What then is Jesus's relation to that one?

اَمْ اَرَدْتُمْ بِهَا ٱلصِّفَاتِ فَلِمْ خُصَّ
تْ ثُلَاثٌ بِوَصْفِهِ وَثُنَآءُ

229. *Or do you define the three as attributes?*
Why limit them to three or even two?

اَمْ هُوَ ٱبْنٌ لِلّٰهِ مَا شَارَكَتْهُ
فِي مَعَانِي ٱلْبُنُوَّةِ ٱلْاَنْبِيَآءُ

230. *Or is Jesus the son of God whose sonhood*
is a mystery no other prophets proclaimed?

قَتَلَتْهُ ٱلْيَهُودُ فِيمَا زَعَمْتُمْ
وَلِاَمْوَاتِكُمْ بِهِ إِحْيَآءُ

231. *According to you, the Judaists killed Jesus—*
and yet he restored your dead to life!

اِنَّ قَوْلًا اَطْلَقْتُمُوهُ عَلَى ٱللّٰهِ
تَعَالَى ذِكْرًا لَقَوْلٌ هُرَآءُ

232. *These words you've unleashed against God—*
exalted be His Name—are just plain prattle;

مِثْلَ مَا قَالَتِ ٱلْيَهُودُ وَكُلٌّ
لَزِمَتْهُ مَقَالَةٌ شَنْعَاءُ

233. *Likewise, the Judaists' claim of no change:*
each statement entails a horrid assent.

إِذْ هُمُ ٱسْتَقْرَؤُوا ٱلْبَدَآءَ وَكَمْ سَا
قَ وَبَالًا إِلَيْهِمُ ٱسْتِقْرَآءُ

234. *They surmised their divine revelation irrevocable;*
and such surmising sent sorrows down on them!

وَأَرَاهُمْ لَمْ يَجْعَلُوا ٱلْوَاحِدَ ٱلْقَهَّـ
ـارَ فِي ٱلْخَلْقِ فَاعِلًا مَا يَشَآءُ

235. *It seems they do not deem the Unique, Almighty,*
capable of asserting absolute will upon creation.

جَوَّزُوا ٱلنَّسْخَ مِثْلَ مَا جَوَّزَ ٱلْمَسْـ
ـخَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فُقَهَآءُ

236. *In reasoning well, they would allow abrogation,*
just as they allowed the possibility of mutation.[33]

هُوَ اِلَّا اَنْ يُرْفَعَ ٱلْحُكْمُ بِٱلْحُكْ
مِ وَخَلْقٌ فِيهِ وَاَمْرٌ سَوَآءُ

237. *Abrogation replaces one decree with another;*
hence, mutation or new legislation is the same.

وَلِحُكْمٍ مِنَ ٱلزَّمَانِ ٱنْتِهَاءٌ
وَلِحُكْمٍ مِنَ ٱلزَّمَانِ ٱبْتِدَآءُ

238. *Just as one judgment may end at an appointed time,*
a new judgment may commence at a point in time.

فَسَلُوهُمْ اَكَانَ فِي مَسْخِهِمْ نَسْ
خٌ لِآيَاتِ ٱللّٰهِ اَمْ اِنْشَآءُ

239. *Ask them: in their mutation was there an abrogation*
for those signs of God, or was that a new creation?

وَبَدَآءٌ فِي قَوْلِهِمْ نَدِمَ ٱللّٰهُ
عَلَىٰ خَلْقِ آدَمٍ أَمْ خَطَآءُ

240. *And did their claim that God regretted Adam*[34]
imply God's revocation or their Book's blunder?

اَمْ مَحَا ٱللّٰهُ آيَةَ ٱللَّيْلِ ذُكْرًا
بَعْدَ سَهْوٍ لِيُوجَدَ ٱلْإِمْسَآءُ

241. *Or did God knowingly remove night's darkness*
after forgetting so that night might be restored?[35]

اَمْ بَدَا لِلْإِلٰهِ فِى ذَبْحِ إِسْحَا
قَ وَقَدْ كَانَ ٱلْاَمْرُ فِيهِ مَضَآءُ

242. *Or did it appear to God to revoke the slaying of Isaac*[36]
after the affair's decision had already been decreed?

اَوَمَآ حَرَّمَ ٱلْإِلٰهُ نِكَاحَ ٱلْـ
أُخْتِ بَعْدَ ٱلتَّحْلِيلِ فَهْوَ ٱلزِّنَآءُ

243. *And didn't God prohibit marrying one's sister*
after being allowed—which is now a vicious act?[37]

لَا تُكَذِّبْ اَنَّ ٱلْيَهُودَ وَقَدْ زَا
غُوا عَنِ ٱلْحَقِّ مَعْشَرٌ لُؤَمَآءُ

244. *Deny not that Judaists have fallen far away*
from truth—a lowly bunch they've become!

جَحَدُوا ٱلْمُصْطَفَىٰ وَآمَنَ بِٱلطَّا
غُوتِ قَوْمٌ هُمْ عِنْدَهُمْ شُرَفَآءُ

245. *They rejected Muṣṭafā and believed in idols—*
and those idolators they deemed noblemen.

قَتَلُوا ٱلْأَنْبِيَآءَ وَٱتَّخَذُوا ٱلْعِجْـ
لَ أَلَآ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ ٱلسُّفَهَآءُ

246. *They killed their prophets and worshipped a calf.*
Isn't it they who are among fools and idiots?

وَسَفِيهٌ مَنْ سَآءَهُ ٱلْمَنُّ وَٱلسَّلْـ
وَىٰ وَأَرْضَاهُ ٱلْفُومُ وَٱلْقِثَّآءُ

247. *For manna and quail repel shameless simpletons,*
while garlic and cucumbers please them well!

مُلِئَتْ بِٱلْخَبِيثِ مِنْهُمْ بُطُونٌ
فَهْيَ نَارٌ طِبَاقُهَا ٱلْأَمْعَآءُ

248. *Their bellies full of foulness will become a fiery*
blaze, its levels layered within their entrails.

لَوْ أُرِيدُوا فِى حَالِ سَبْتٍ بِخَيْرٍ
كَانَ سَبْتًا لَدَيْهِمُ ٱلْأَرْبِعَآءُ

249. *If good was intended for them on their Sabbath,*
then their Saturday would be on Wednesday:[38]

هُوَ يَوْمٌ مُبَارَكٌ قِيلَ لِلتَّصْـ
رِيفِ فِيهِ مِنَ ٱلْيَهُودِ ٱعْتِدَآءُ

250. *The Sabbath is a blessed day, and it's said a*
transaction that day results in transgression.

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِنْهُمْ وَكُفْرٍ عَدَتْهُمْ
طَيِّبَاتٌ فِى تَرْكِهِنَّ ٱبْتِلَآءُ

251. *Due to their wrongs and disbelief, provision*
bypassed them, and its loss was a tribulation.

THE JUDAISTS AND THE CONFEDERATES

خُدِّعُوا بِٱلْمُنَافِقِينَ وَهَلْ يُنْـ
فَقُ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلسَّفِيهِ ٱلشَّقَآءُ

252. *They were duped by hypocrites—and can misery*
be dispensed to anyone other than a dullard—

وَٱطْمَأَنُّوا۟ بِقَوْلِ ٱلْأَحْزَابِ إِخْوَا
نِهِمْ إِنَّنَا لَكُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ

253. *Comforted by the claim of their Confederates,*[39]
"Indeed, we will be your allies and your aid."

حَالَفُوهُمْ وَخَالَفُوهُمْ وَلَمْ أَدْ
رِ لِمَاذَا تَخَالَفَ ٱلْحُلَفَآءُ

254. *They agreed to ally, then decried their alliance:*
why allies disavow one another is a mystery to me!

أَسْلَمُوهُمْ لِأَوَّلِ ٱلْحَشْرِ لَا مِيـ
عَادُهُمْ صَادِقٌ وَلَا ٱلْإِيلَآءُ

255. *The hypocrites forsook the first diaspora,*[40]
proving insincere in both promise and pledge.

سَكَنَ ٱلرُّعْبُ وَٱلْخَرَابُ قُلُوبًا
وَبُيُوتًا مِنْهُمْ نَعَاهَا ٱلْجَلَآءُ

256. *Dread and desolation dwelt in their hearts*
and homes—the diaspora proved a death knell.

وَبِيَوْمِ ٱلْأَحْزَابِ إِذْ زَاغَتِ ٱلْأَبْـ
ـصَارُ فِيهِ وَضَلَّتِ ٱلْآرَاءُ

257. *Again, they were duped on the Day of Confederates,*
with eyes misdirected and strategies set astray,

وَتَعَدَّوْا إِلَى ٱلنَّبِيِّ حُدُودًا
كَانَ فِيهَا عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْعَدْوَاءُ

258. *They transgressed all limits against the Prophet,*
and in doing so, delivered their own destruction.

وَنَهَتْهُمْ وَمَا ٱنْتَهَتْ عَنْهُ قَوْمٌ
فَأُبِيدَ ٱلْأَمَّارُ وَٱلنَّهَّاءُ

259. *Some called for restraint, others wouldn't refrain*
until both instigator and protester perished.

وَتَعَاطَوْا فِي أَحْمَدٍ مُنْكَرَ ٱلْقَوْ
لِ وَنُطْقُ ٱلْأَرَاذِلِ ٱلْعَوْرَاءُ

260. *They let loose their foul words against Aḥmad*[41]*—*
and debased are the attacks of the deplorables!

كُلُّ رِجْسٍ يَزِيدُهُ ٱلْخُلُقُ ٱلسُّوْ
ءُ سَفَاهًا وَٱلْمِلَّةُ ٱلْعَوْجَاءُ

261. *Evil character only intensifies such vileness*
with insolence, as do twisted tenets of false faith.

فَٱنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ ٱلْقَوْ
مِ وَمَا سَاقَ لِلْبَذِيِّ ٱلْبَذَاءُ

262. *Deliberate deeply the final lot of a forlorn folk*
and what the cursing of a curser delivers.

وَجَدَ ٱلسَّبَّ فِيهِ سُمًّا وَلَمْ يَدْ
رِ إِذِ ٱلْمِيمُ فِى مَوَاضِعَ بَاءُ

263. *The curser found his vitriol venomous,*
not knowing that bā' can replace mīm.[42]

كَانَ مِنْ فِيهِ قَتْلُهُ بِيَدَيْهِ
فَهْوَ فِى سُوءِ فِعْلِهِ ٱلزَّبَّاءُ

264. *From his very lips his curse caused his death,*
resembling Zenobia[43] *in his dastardly deed,*

اَوْ هُوَ ٱلنَّحْلُ قَرْصُهَا يَجْلِبُ ٱلْحَتْ
فَ إِلَيْهَا وَمَا لَهُ إِنْكَاءُ

265. *Akin to a bee who afflicts a fatal sting for itself*
but leaves no lasting effect on the one stung.

THE DEFEAT OF QURAYSH

صَرَعَتْ قَوْمَهُ حَبَائِلُ بَغْيٍ
مَدَّهَا ٱلْمَكْرُ مِنْهُمُ وَٱلدَّهَاءُ

266. *His people were waylaid by their own snares*
that their wiles and wits had hatched for them.

فَأَتَتْهُمْ خَيْلٌ إِلَى ٱلْحَرْبِ تَخْتَا
لُ وَلِلْخَيْلِ فِي ٱلْوَغَى خُيَلَاءُ

267. *And so their stallions strutted to wage war—*
and stallions swagger best on a battlefield.

قَصَدَتْ فِيهِمُ ٱلْقَنَا فَقَوَافِي ٱلطَّ
عْنِ مِنْهَا مَا شَانَهَا ٱلْإِيطَاءُ

268. *Lances hurled at them like a poem's rhyme scheme*
but no less effective for its regular repetition.

وَاَثَارَتْ بِاَرْضِ مَكَّةَ نَقْعًا
ظُنَّ اَنَّ ٱلْغُدُوَّ مِنْهَا عِشَآءُ

269. *Their hooves stirred up a pother of Meccan earth,*
such that dawn appeared as if it were twilight.

اَحْجَمَتْ عِنْدَهُ ٱلْحَجُونُ وَاَكْدَىٰ
عِنْدَ اِعْطَآئِهِ ٱلْقَلِيلَ كُدَآءُ

270. *Due to the dust, Mount Ḥajūn held them back,*
as did Kudā' where a smaller force was sent.[44]

وَدَهَتْ اَوْجُهًا بِهَا وَبُيُوتًا
مَلَّ مِنْهَا ٱلْاِكْفَآءُ وَٱلْاِقْوَآءُ

271. *The steeds dealt doom to the faces and homes*
that despaired of help and had lost all hope.[45]

THE PROPHET'S MERCY AND OTHER SUBLIME QUALITIES

فَدَعَوْا اَحْلَمَ ٱلْبَرِيَّةِ وَٱلْعَفْـ
ـوُ جَوَابُ ٱلْحَلِيمِ وَٱلْاِغْضَآءُ

272. *They called on the most clement of creation,*
and his response was pardon and condonation.

نَاشَدُوهُ ٱلْقُرْبَى ٱلَّتِي مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ
قَطَعَتْهَا ٱلتِّرَاتُ وَٱلشَّحْنَآءُ

273. *They implored him for the sake of clan kinship,*
severed by their murders, malice, and animus.

فَعَفَا عَفْوَ قَادِرٍ لَمْ يُنَغِّصْـ
ـهُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا مَضَى إِغْرَآءُ

274. *Yet he pardoned them, as only the powerful can—*
a pardon pure and unsullied by past incitements.

وَإِذَا كَانَ ٱلْقَطْعُ وَٱلْوَصْلُ لِلّٰهِ
تَسَاوَى ٱلتَّقْرِيبُ وَٱلْإِقْصَآءُ

275. *For when bonds are severed or maintained for God,*
closeness to clan or its distance have equal weight.

وَسَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِ فِيمَا أَتَاهُ
مِنْ سِوَاهُ ٱلْمَلَامُ وَٱلْإِطْرَآءُ

276. *To such a one, what others say remains the same—*
whether overwrought praise or censorious blame.

وَلَوَ انَّ انْتِقَامَهُ لِهَوَى ٱلنَّفْ
سِ لَدَامَتْ قَطِيعَةٌ وَجَفَاءُ

277. *Had his retribution been born of vengeful passion,
severance of all ties and disdain would have endured.*

فَقَامَ لِلّٰهِ فِي ٱلْأُمُورِ فَأَرْضَى ٱللّٰهَ
مِنْهُ تَبَايُنٌ وَوَفَاءُ

278. *He acted for God in all matters—pleasing to God
in his distance from foes and fealty to friends.*

فِعْلُهُ كُلُّهُ جَمِيلٌ وَهَلْ يَنْ
ضَحُ إِلَّا بِمَا حَوَاهُ ٱلْإِنَاءُ

279. *All his deeds are delightful; can a vessel pour
forth anything other than what it contains?*

اَطْرَبَ ٱلسَّامِعِينَ ذِكْرُ عُلَاهُ
يَا لَرَاحٍ مَالَتْ بِهِ ٱلنُّدَمَاءُ

280. *To listeners, mention of his eminence intoxicates;
what a calming wine to which imbibers incline!*

ٱلنَّبِيُّ ٱلْأُمِّيُّ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ أَسْـ
نَدَ عَنْهُ ٱلرُّوَاةُ وَٱلْحُكَمَآءُ

281. *The unlettered Prophet is the most learned of those*
whose words warrant transmittal by sages and citers.

IMAM AL-BŪṢĪRĪ DESIRES TO PERFORM THE HAJJ

وَعَدَتْنِي ٱزْدِيَارَهُ ٱلْعَامَ وَجْنَا
ءُ وَمَنَّتْ بِوَعْدِهَا ٱلْوَجْنَآءُ

282. *A camel promised me a trip to the Prophet this year,*
and that stalwart mount graciously kept her vow.

أَفَلَا أَنْطَوِي لَهَا فِي ٱقْتِضَآئِيـ
ـهِ لِتُطْوَى مَا بَيْنَنَا ٱلْأَفْلَآءُ

283. *Shall I not press close against her as she obliges me,*
so the desert's distance dividing us closes with ease?

بِٱلُوفِ ٱلْبَطْحَآءِ يُجْفِلُهَا ٱلنِّيـ
ـلُ وَقَدْ شَفَّ جَوْفَهَا ٱلْإِظْمَآءُ

284. *To this devotee of the holiest of Hollows, the Nile*
can't distract, despite her own parched hollows!

اَنكَرَتْ مِصْرَ فَهْيَ تَنْفِرُ مَا لَا
حَ بِنَآءٌ لِعَيْنِهَا اَوْ خَلَآءُ

285. *Egypt she now disavows, and flies forth,*
fleeing from its terraces and terrains.

فَاَفَضَّتْ عَلَى مَبَارِكِهَا بِرْ
كَتُهَا فَالْبُوَيْبُ فَالْخَضْرَآءُ

286. *She presses on to gushing springs on the road to hajj,*
first Birkah, then Buwayb, then the well of Khaḍrā’![46]

فَالْقِبَابُ الَّتِي تَلِيهَا فَبِئْرُ النَّ
خْلِ وَالرَّكْبُ قَائِلُونَ رِوَآءُ

287. *Qibāb further on, then Nakhl’s well where*
riders take repose in siesta, slaked of thirst.

وَغَدَتْ اَيْلَةٌ وَحِقْلٌ وَقَرٌّ
خَلْفَهَا فَالْمَغَارَةُ الْفَيْحَآءُ

288. *She left Aylah, Ḥiql, and Qarr far behind her,*
then went on to Shu‘ayb’s capacious cavern.

فَعُيُونُ ٱلْأَقْصَابِ يَتْبَعُهَا ٱلنَّبْـ
ـكُ وَتَتْلُو كُفَافَةَ ٱلْعَوْجَآءُ

289. *Next came the springs of al-Aqṣāb, then al-Nabk,*
followed by Kafāfah, winding off a well-trodden trail.

حَاوَرَتْهَا ٱلْحَوْرَآءُ شَوْقًا فَيَنْبُو
عُ فَرَقَّ ٱلْيَنْبُوعُ وَٱلْحَوْرَآءُ

290. *Al-Ḥawrā' heralded her wistfully, followed by Yanbū';*
all the while, Yanbū'[47] *yearned to set out, al-Ḥawrā' too.*

لَاحَ بِٱلدَّهْنَوَيْنِ بَدْرٌ لَهَا بَعْـ
ـدَ حُنَيْنٍ وَحَنَّتِ ٱلصَّفْرَآءُ

291. *At al-Dahnawayn, Badr shone forth before her*
after Ḥunayn appeared and suffering Ṣafrā' pined.

وَنَضَتْ بَزْوَةٌ فَرَابِغُ فَٱلْجُحْـ
ـفَةُ عَنْهَا مَا حَاكَهُ ٱلْإِنْضَآءُ

292. *Any weariness and wasting the journey had woven*
was removed by Bazwah, then Rābigh, then Juḥfah.

وَأَرَتْهَا ٱلْخَلَاصَ بِئْرُ عَلِيٍّ
فَعُقَابُ ٱلسُّوَيْقِ فَٱلْخَلْصَاءُ

293. *And the well of ʿAlī slaked her thirst and solaced her,*
as did the wells of ʿUqāb al-Suwayq and of al-Khalaṣā'.

فَهِيَ مِنْ مَاءِ بِئْرِ عُسْفَانَ أَوْ مِنْ
بَطْنِ مَرٍّ ظَمْآنَةٌ خَمْصَاءُ

294. *Next, she thirsted for the waters of ʿUsfān's wells,*
and for the fodder in Marr's valley she hungered.

قَرَّبَ ٱلزَّاهِرُ ٱلْمَسَاجِدَ مِنْهَا
بِخُطَاهَا فَٱلْبُطْءُ مِنْهَا وَحَاءُ

295. *The mosques proclaimed al-Zāhir*[48] *nearby; each*
stride made her slow-strolled beat more brisk:

هَـٰذِهِ عِدَّةُ ٱلْمَنَازِلِ لَا مَا
عُدَّ فِيهِ ٱلسِّمَاكُ وَٱلْعَوَّاءُ

296. *I'm recounting the stations from Egypt's land—*
not the lunar stations of Arcturus and Boötes.

فَكَأَنِّي بِهَآ أُرَحِّلُ مِنْ مَكَّ
ةَ شَمْسًا سَمَآؤُهَا ٱلْبَيْدَآءُ

297. *From Mecca to 'Arafah, the camel I rode upon*
became a sun whose canopy was the desert.

مَوْضِعُ ٱلْبَيْتِ مَهْبِطُ ٱلْوَحْيِ مَأْوَى ٱلرُّ
سْلِ حَيْثُ ٱلْأَنْوَارُ حَيْثُ ٱلْبَهَآءُ

298. *Mecca! Home of God's Temple, Revelation's berth,*
refuge to the emissaries, and focus of luminosity—

حَيْثُ فَرْضُ ٱلطَّوَافِ وَٱلسَّعْيِ وَٱلْحَلْ
قُ وَرَمْيُ ٱلْجِمَارِ وَٱلْإِهْدَآءُ

299. *Where ṭawāf,*[49] *Hagar's trot, the head's shaving,*
the pebble's pelting, and sacrifices are all ordained.

حَبَّذَا حَبَّذَا مَعَاهِدُ مِنْهَا
لَمْ يُغَيِّرْ آيَاتِهِنَّ ٱلْبَلَآءُ

300. *How loved, how loved such sites of renewed visits,*
their wonders untarnished by the taint of time!

حَرَمٌ آمِنٌ وَبَيْتٌ حَرَامٌ
وَمَقَامٌ فِيهِ ٱلْمُقَامُ تَلَآءُ

301. *A secure sanctuary, an inviolate, sacred temple,*
a Prophet's station in God's own neighborhood—

فَقَضَيْنَا بِهَا مَنَاسِكَ لَا يُحْـ
ـمَدُ إِلَّا فِي فِعْلِهِنَّ ٱلْقَضَآءُ

302. *We performed rites there that merit praise*
that no other place's fulfillments merit.

MEDINA, THE ILLUMINATED CITY

وَرَمَيْنَا بِهَا ٱلْفِجَاجَ إِلَى طَيْـ
ـبَةَ وَٱلسَّيْرُ بِٱلْمَطَايَا رِمَآءُ

303. *On her, like an arrow, we passed mountain passes,*
to Ṭaybah—saddle travel resembles an arrow shot.

فَأَصَبْنَا عَنْ قَوْسِهَا غَرَضَ ٱلْقُرْ
ـبِ وَنِعْمَ ٱلْخَبِيئَةُ ٱلْكَوْمَآءُ

304. *From her bow, we struck the target of proximity.*
What a resource that high-humped dromedary!

فَرَأَيْنَا أَرْضَ ٱلْحَبِيبِ يَغُضُّ ٱلطَّ
رْفَ مِنْهَا ٱلضِّيَاءُ وَٱللَّأْلَاءُ

305. *We could see the Beloved's place come into sight,*
its bright light laid low the onlooker's fixed gaze.

فَكَأَنَّ ٱلْبَيْدَاءَ مِنْ حَيْثُ مَا قَا
بَلَتِ ٱلْعَيْنُ رَوْضَةٌ غَنَّاءُ

306. *That dry desert, when met by a beholding eye,*
appeared as a luxuriant, verdant meadow—

وَكَأَنَّ ٱلْبِقَاعَ زُرَّتْ عَلَيْهَا
طَرَفَيْهَا مُلَاءَةٌ حَمْرَاءُ

307. *As if its lands had woven cinnabar cloth*
that cloaked it in crimson on both sides,[50]

وَكَأَنَّ ٱلْأَرْجَاءَ تَنْشُرُ نَشْرَ ٱلْ
مِسْكِ فِيهَا ٱلْجَنُوبُ وَٱلْجِرْبِيَاءُ

308. *As if Notos and Boreas carried the scent of musk*
emanating from every quarter of the sacred city.

فَاِذَا شِمْتَ اَوْ شَمَمْتَ رُبَاهَا
لَاحَ مِنْهَا بَرْقٌ وَفَاحَ كِبَاءُ

309. *From her hills one gets glimmers of lightning*
and can sense the sweet scent of her aloes.

اَيَّ نُورٍ وَاَيَّ نَوْرٍ شَهِدْنَا
يَوْمَ اَبْدَتْ لَنَا ٱلْقِبَابَ قُبَاءُ

310. *What light, what blossoms we witnessed*
on the day Qubā' displayed her domes to us!

قَرَّ مِنْهَا دَمْعِي وَفَرَّ ٱصْطِبَارِي
فَدُمُوعِي سَيْلٌ وَصَبْرِي جُفَاءُ

311. *Beholding it, my tears flowed and my poise fled,*
as if a flash flood, and my patience froth upon it.

فَتَرَى ٱلرَّكْبَ طَائِرِينَ مِنَ ٱلشَّوْ
قِ اِلَى طَيْبَةٍ لَهُمْ ضَوْضَاءُ

312. *One sees pilgrims propelled by their longing*
for Ṭaybah, a drone of devotions resounding,

فَكَأَنَّ ٱلزُّوَّارَ مَا مَسَّتِ ٱلْبَأْ
سَآءُ مِنْهُمْ خَلْقًا وَلَا ٱلضَّرَّآءُ

313. *As if these visitors were left unscathed*
by the hardships and trials of their trails.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مِنْهَا ٱبْتِهَالٌ وَسُؤْلٌ
وَدُعَآءٌ وَرَغْبَةٌ وَٱبْتِغَآءُ

314. *From every soul solicitations, supplications,*
invocations, aspirations, and implorations,

وَزَفِيرٌ تَظُنُّ مِنْهُ صُدُورًا
صَادِحَاتٍ يَعْتَادُهُنَّ زُقَآءُ

315. *With heaving sighs—you would think the breasts*
were songbirds with chirping chants arising—

وَبُكَآءٌ يُغْرِيهِ بِٱلْعَيْنِ مَدٌّ
وَنَحِيبٌ يَحُثُّهُ ٱسْتِعْلَآءُ

316. *With weeping waxing as a rising tide*
and wailing swelling with elevated vocals—

وَجُسُومٌ كَأَنَّمَا رَحَضَتْهَا
مِنْ عَظِيمِ الْمَهَابَةِ الرُّحَضَاءُ

317. *Their bodies as though thoroughly drenched*
by a feverish sudor[51] *born of awe and majesty.*

وَوُجُوهٌ كَأَنَّمَا أَلْبَسَتْهَا
مِنْ حَيَاءٍ أَلْوَانَهَا الْحِرْبَاءُ

318. *And their faces—such immense modesty—as if*
a chameleon clad them in a collage of its colors.

وَدُمُوعٌ كَأَنَّمَا أَرْسَلَتْهَا
مِنْ جُفُونٍ سَحَابَةٌ وَطْفَاءُ

319. *Tears streamed from their eyes, as if let loose*
by low-lying clouds, weighted down with rain.

فَحَطَطْنَا الرِّحَالَ حَيْثُ يُحَطُّ الْ
وِزْرُ عَنَّا وَتُرْفَعُ الْحَوْجَاءُ

320. *We alighted where the leaden load of one's sins*
is laid down and one's wants lifted away.

وَقَرَأْنَا ٱلسَّلَامَ أَكْرَمَ خَلْقِ ٱللّٰهِ
مِنْ حَيْثُ يُسْمَعُ ٱلْإِقْرَآءُ

321. *We conveyed salutations of peace to the Noblest*
of God's Creation; there every conveyance is heard.

وَذَهِلْنَا عِنْدَ ٱللِّقَآءِ وَكَمْ أَذْ
هَلَ صَبًّا مِنَ ٱلْحَبِيبِ لِقَآءُ

322. *We were left dazed at our encounter—*
a paramour's passion can stupefy a lover!

وَوَجَمْنَا مِنَ ٱلْمَهَابَةِ حَتَّى
لَا كَلَامٌ مِنَّا وَلَا إِيمَآءُ

323. *Dumbstruck from the beauty left us*
without a word or even a gesture.

THE RETURN HOME

وَرَجَعْنَا وَلِلْقُلُوبِ ٱلْتِفَاتَا
تٌ إِلَيْهِ وَلِلْجُسُومِ ٱنْثِنَآءُ

324. *We returned with hearts turned toward him—*
our bodies burned with such desire to return.

وَسَمَحْنَا بِمَا نُحِبُّ وَقَدْ يَسْـ
ـمَحُ عِنْدَ ٱلضَّرُورَةِ ٱلْبُخَلَاءُ

325. *We gave up that which we loved most—*
even misers can from need forgo greed!

COMMUNION WITH THE BELOVED ﷺ

يَا أَبَا ٱلْقَاسِمِ ٱلَّذِي ضِمْنَ إِقْسَا
مِي عَلَيْهِ مَدْحٌ لَهُ وَثَنَاءُ

326. *O Abu al-Qasim,*[52] *for whom my oath contains*
my laud as well as immense appreciation,

بِٱلْعُلُومِ ٱلَّتِي عَلَيْكَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ
بِلَا كَاتِبٍ لَهَا إِمْلَاءُ

327. *I swear by the knowledges gifted to you from God,*
through no scrivener, but rather divine dictation—

وَمَسِيرِ ٱلصَّبَا بِنَصْرِكَ شَهْرًا
فَكَأَنَّ ٱلصَّبَا لَدَيْكَ رُخَاءُ

328. *I swear by Eurus's journey that carried such victory*
from a month's distance, as if at your beck and call.[53]

وَعَلِيٍّ لَمَّا تَفَلْتَ بِعَيْنَيْ
هِ وَكِلْتَاهُمَا مَعًا رَمْدَآءُ

329. *By God, I beseech you by 'Alī and miracles performed*
when you blew spittle that cured his inflamed eye—

فَغَدَا نَاظِرًا بِعَيْنَيْ عُقَابٍ
فِي غَزَاةٍ لَهَا ٱلْعُقَابُ لِوَآءُ

330. *From then on, he beheld with renewed, eagle eyes—*
at the battle where the Eagle[54] *was its standard.*

وَبِرَيْحَانَتَيْنِ طِيبُهُمَا مِنْ
كَ ٱلَّذِي أَوْدَعَتْهُمَا ٱلزَّهْرَآءُ

331. *And I beseech you by the two fragrant ones whose scent*
draws from yours, those entrusted to the Radiant Lady.[55]

كُنْتَ تُؤْوِيهِمَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا آ
وَتْ مِنَ ٱلْخَطِّ نُقْطَتَيْهَا ٱلْيَآءُ

332. *You brought the two close—just as the letter ya'*
holds the two dots close in careful calligraphy—

مِن شَهِيدَيْنِ لَيْسَ يُنْسِينِيَ ٱلطَّفُّ
مُصَابَيْهِمَا وَلَا كَرْبَلَآءُ

333. *Two martyrs who suffered such callous calamities*
that neither Ṭaff nor Karbala'[56] *will let me forget.*

مَا رَعَىٰ فِيهِمَا ذِمَامَكَ مَرْؤُو
سٌ وَقَدْ خَانَ عَهْدَكَ ٱلرُّؤَسَآءُ

334. *Those under them betrayed your trust,*
and the overlords broke their covenant with you.

اَبْدَلُوا ٱلْوُدَّ وَٱلْحَفِيظَةَ فِى ٱلْقُرْ
بَىٰ وَاَبْدَتْ ضِبَابَهَا ٱلنَّافِقَآءُ

335. *They forsook love and protection of your kin,*
as the two-faced burrow bares jerboas inside.[57]

وَقَسَتْ مِنْهُمْ قُلُوبٌ عَلَىٰ مَنْ
بَكَتِ ٱلْارْضُ فَقْدَهُمْ وَٱلسَّمَآءُ

336. *Their hearts hardened toward two for whom*
even the earth and sky wept from their loss.

فَٱبْكِهِمْ مَا ٱسْتَطَعْتَ إِنَّ قَلِيلًا
فِي عَظِيمٍ مِنَ ٱلْمُصَابِ ٱلْبُكَاءُ

337. *Weep for them as best you can, for weeping*
is the least one can do when facing enormities.

كُلَّ يَوْمٍ وَكُلَّ أَرْضٍ لِكَرْبِي
مِنْهُمُ كَرْبَلَا وَعَاشُورَاءُ

338. *My distress over their fate is such that each day*
is to me as if an ‘Āshūrā’, every place a Karbalā’.

آلَ بَيْتِ ٱلنَّبِيِّ إِنَّ فُؤَادِي
لَيْسَ يُسْلِيهِ عَنْكُمُ ٱلتَّأَسَاءُ

339. *O Family of the Prophet, no trials or traumas*
will ever distract my heart from devotion to you,

غَيْرَ أَنِّي فَوَّضْتُ أَمْرِي إِلَى ٱللهِ
وَتَفْوِيضِيَ ٱلْأُمُورَ بَرَاءُ

340. *Yet I have entrusted my affair to God alone,*
and such reliance in one’s affairs liberates.

رُبَّ يَوْمٍ بِكَرْبَلَاءَ مُسِيءٍ
خَفَّفَتْ بَعْضَ وِزْرِهِ ٱلزَّوْرَاءُ

341. *Perhaps the grievous day endured at Karbalā'*
had its load lightened just a little at al-Zawrā',[58]

وَٱلْاعَادِي كَأَنَّ كُلَّ طَرِيحٍ
مِنْهُمُ ٱلزِّقُّ حُلَّ عَنْهُ ٱلْوِكَاءُ

342. *When all their enemies were as if flung down,*
bloated waterskins, their tethered tops untied.

آلَ بَيْتِ ٱلنَّبِيِّ طِبْتُمْ فَطَابَ ٱلْـ
مَدْحُ لِي فِيكُمُ وَطَابَ ٱلرِّثَاءُ

343. *O Family of the Prophet, unsullied and good are you!*
For me, worthy is your praise and pure your elegy!

اَنَا حَسَّانُ مَدْحِكُمْ فَاِذَا نُحْـ
تُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاِنَّنِي ٱلْخَنْسَاءُ

344. *In these your poetic paeans, I am your Ḥassān;*
I've wailed for your loss as if I'm al-Khansā'.[59]

سُدْتُمُ ٱلنَّاسَ بِٱلتُّقَىٰ وَسِوَاكُمْ
سَوَّدَتْهُ ٱلْبَيْضَآءُ وَٱلصَّفْرَآءُ

345. *You became mankind's masters through godliness,*
whereas others are made masters by gold and silver.

وَبِأَصْحَابِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ هُمُ بَعْـ
ـدَكَ فِينَا ٱلْهُدَاةُ وَٱلْأَوْصِيَآءُ

346. *I beseech you by your companions who, after you,*
were guileless guides to whom you entrusted us.

أَحْسَنُوا بَعْدَكَ ٱلْخِلَافَةَ فِي ٱلدِّيـ
ـنِ وَكُلٌّ لِمَا تَوَلَّىٰ إِزَآءُ

347. *After you, they fulfilled well the vicegerency,*
each one competent at the task he took on.

أَغْنِيَآءٌ نَزَاهَةً فُقَرَآءٌ
عُلَمَآءٌ أَئِمَّةٌ أُمَرَآءُ

348. *Wealthy in their detachment, in spirit fakirs,*
scholars, exemplars, and princes among men.

زَهِدُوا فِى الدُّنَا فَمَا عُرِفَ الْمَيْـ
ـلُ إِلَيْهَا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا الرَّغْبَآءُ

349. *Divested from this ephemeral world,*
no hint or desire in them of its allure.

أَرْخَصُوا فِى الْوَغَى نُفُوسَ مُلُوكٍ
حَارَبُوهَا أَسْلَابُهَا إِغْلَآءُ

350. *In the din of battle, they trifled with kings' lives,*
fighting without concern for a king's ransom.

كُلُّهُمْ فِى أَحْكَامِهِ ذُو اجْتِهَادٍ
وَصَوَابٍ وَكُلُّهُمْ أَكْفَآءُ

351. *Each of them in judgments a master jurist,*
precise in point, an equal to all the others.

رَضِىَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمُ وَرَضُوا عَنْـ
ـهُ فَأَنَّى يَخْطُو إِلَيْهِمْ خَطَاءُ

352. *Pleasing to God, they were pleased with God.*
How then could a slipup slip one of them up?

جَآءَ قَوْمٌ مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوْمٍ بِحَقٍّ
وَعَلَى ٱلْمَنْهَجِ ٱلْحَنِيفِيِّ جَآؤُوا

353. *One generation after another brought this truth*
upon the primordial path that they maintained.

مَا لِمُوسَىٰ وَلَا لِعِيسَىٰ حَوَارِيُّـ
ونَ فِي فَضْلِهِمْ وَلَا نُقَبَآءُ

354. *Neither Moses nor Jesus was blessed with disciples*
or chiefs of such virtue and convincing character.[60]

HAḌRAT ABŪ BAKR

بِأَبِي بَكْرٍ ٱلَّذِي صَحَّ لِلنَّا
سِ بِهِ فِي حَيَاتِكَ ٱلِٱقْتِدَآءُ

355. *I beseech you by Abū Bakr, who faithfully served*
even in your lifetime as another pillar of prayer;

وَٱلْمُهَدِّي يَوْمَ ٱلسَّقِيفَةِ لَمَّا
اَرْجَفَ ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّهُ ٱلدَّأْدَآءُ

356. *On the Day of the Shelter,*[61] *he settled the hearts:*
when all stood shaken, he quelled the chaos.

أَنْقَذَ ٱلدِّينَ بَعْدَ مَا كَانَ لِلدِّ
ينِ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ كُرْبَةٍ إِشْفَآءُ

357. *He saved the religion after faith was brought*
to the brink of a very agonizing place.

أَنْفَقَ ٱلْمَالَ فِى رِضَاكَ وَلَا مَنٌّ
وَأَعْطَىٰ جَمًّا وَلَا إِكْدَآءُ

358. *He expended wealth for your sake—never*
boasting, giving both boldly and unabatedly.

ḤAḌRAT ʿUMAR ؓ

وَأَبِى حَفْصٍ ٱلَّذِي أَظْهَرَ ٱللَّهُ
بِهِ ٱلدِّينَ فَٱرْعَوَى ٱلرُّقَبَآءُ

359. *I beseech you by Abū Ḥafṣ,*[62] *who for God's sake*
manifested faith—and the enemies saw defeat;

وَٱلَّذِي تَقْرُبُ ٱلْأَبَاعِدُ فِى ٱللَّهِ
إِلَيْهِ وَتَبْعُدُ ٱلْقُرَبَآءُ

360. *The one who for God saw the stranger as kin,*
while his kinsmen, strangers due to deviance:

عُمَرُ بْنُ ٱلْخَطَّابِ مَنْ قَوْلُهُ ٱلْفَصْ
لُ وَمَنْ حُكْمُهُ ٱلسَّوِيُّ ٱلسَّوَآءُ

361. *‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb, whose word was final*
and whose ruling always right and righteous.

فَرَّ مِنْهُ ٱلشَّيْطَانُ إِذْ كَانَ فَارُو
قًا فَلِلنَّارِ مِنْ سَنَاهُ ٱنْبِرَآءُ

362. *Satan fled from him who was truth’s standard;*
and the fire before his brilliance lost its blaze.

ḤADRAT ‘UTHMĀN ﵁

وَٱبْنِ عَفَّانَ ذِي ٱلْأَيَادِي ٱلَّتِي طَا
لَ إِلَى ٱلْمُصْطَفَى بِهَا ٱلْإِسْدَآءُ

363. *I beseech you by Ibn ‘Affān, possessor of plenty,*
which he lavished lovingly on the Chosen One.

حَفَرَ ٱلْبِئْرَ جَهَّزَ ٱلْجَيْشَ أَهْدَى ٱلْ
هَدْيَ لَمَّا أَنْ صَدَّهُ ٱلْأَعْدَآءُ

364. *He dug a well, equipped an army, and carried out*
his sacrifice despite his enemies’ obstruction.

وَاَبَى اَنْ يَطُوفَ بِٱلْبَيْتِ إِذْ لَمْ
يَدْنُ مِنْهُ إِلَى ٱلنَّبِيِّ فِنَاءُ

365. *He declined to circle the Sanctuary's Sacred House*
because its courtyard was so far from the Prophet,

فَجَزَتْهُ عَنْهَا بِبَيْعَةِ رِضْوَا
نِ يَدٌ مِنْ نَبِيِّهِ بَيْضَاءُ

366. *And so, the Prophet's pure hand took the place*
of his hand at the Pledge of Divine Contentment.[63]

اَدَبٌ عِنْدَهُ تَضَاعَفَتِ ٱلْاَعْ
مَالُ بِٱلتَّرْكِ حَبَّذَا ٱلْاُدَبَاءُ

367. *What decorum he displayed! His deeds doubling*
in forgoing—how fine are genuine gentlemen!

ḤADRAT ʿALĪ ﵁

وَعَلِيٌّ صِنْوُ ٱلنَّبِيِّ وَمَنْ دِيـ
نُ فُؤَادِي وِدَادُهُ وَٱلْوَلَاءُ

368. *And by ʿAlī, the Prophet's brother*[64] *of one line,*
for whom my heart's religion is love and fealty;

وَوَزِيرُ ٱبْنِ عَمِّهِ فِى ٱلْمَعَالِى
وَمِنَ ٱلْأَهْلِ تَسْعَدُ ٱلْوُزَرَاءُ

369. *His cousin's minister in every lofty venture;*
from the family such mainstays gain good fortune.

لَمْ يَزِدْهُ كَشْفُ ٱلْغِطَاءِ يَقِينًا
بَلْ هُوَ ٱلشَّمْسُ مَا عَلَيْهِ غِطَاءُ

370. *No unveiling of reality could add to his certainty—*
he is the resplendent sun never to be covered!

THE REMAINING TEN COMPANIONS رضي الله عنهم ASSURED OF PARADISE

وَبِبَاقِى أَصْحَابِكَ ٱلْمُظْهِرِ ٱلتَّرْ
تِيبَ فِينَا تَفْضِيلَهُمْ وَٱلْوَلَاءُ

371. *By the rest of your companions promised paradise,*
those whose preference and fealty you revealed to us:

طَلْحَةِ ٱلْخَيْرِ ٱلْمُرْتَضِيهِ رَفِيقًا
وَاحِدًا يَوْمَ فَرَّتِ ٱلرُّفَقَاءُ

372. *By Ṭalḥah, the generous, so pleasing to the Prophet,*
his sole comrade on the day when comrades fled;[65]

وَحَوَارِيِّكَ ٱلزُّبَيْرِ اَبِي ٱلْقَرْ
مِ ٱلَّذِي اَنْجَبَتْ بِهِۦ اَسْمَآءُ

373. By your sole disciple Zubayr,[66] father of that
noble chief,[67] the one whom Asmā' had borne;

وَٱلصَّفِيَّيْنِ تَوْأَمِ ٱلْفَضْلِ سَعْدٍ
وَسَعِيدٍ اِنْ عُدَّتِ ٱلْاَصْفِيَآءُ

374. By the pure ones, virtue's twins, Sa'd and Sa'īd:[68]
when the elect are listed, they're among them;

وَٱبْنِ عَوْفٍ مَنْ هَوَّنَتْ نَفْسُهُ ٱلدُّنْ
يَا بِبَذْلٍ يُمِدُّهُ اِثْرَآءُ

375. By Ibn 'Awf, whose soul so belittled this world
by constant spending only adding to his wealth;

وَٱلْمُكَنَّى اَبَا عُبَيْدَةَ اِذْ يَعْ
زِي اِلَيْهِ ٱلْاَمَانَةَ ٱلْاُمَنَآءُ

376. By Abū 'Ubaydah, dubbed the trustworthy,
since trustees attributed their trust to him;

وَبِعَمَّيْكَ نَيِّرَيْ فَلَكِ ٱلْمَجْـ
ـدِ وَكُلٌّ اَتَاهُ مِنْكَ إِتَآءُ

377. *By your uncles,[69] two stars in glory's orbit,*
on both of whom good from you alighted;

وَبِأُمِّ ٱلسِّبْطَيْنِ زَوْجِ عَلِيٍّ
وَبَنِيهَا وَمَنْ حَوَتْهُ ٱلْعَبَآءُ

378. *By the mother of your grandsons, 'Alī's wife,*
and by their kin enwrapped in your cloak;[70]

وَبِأَزْوَاجِكَ ٱللَّوَاتِي تَشَرَّفْـ
ـنَ بِأَنْ صَانَهُنَّ مِنْكَ بِنَآءُ

379. *By your wives, those blessed with honor*
and providence through intimacy with you;

اَلْأَمَانَ ٱلْأَمَانَ إِنَّ فُؤَادِي
مِنْ ذُنُوبٍ أَتَيْتُهُنَّ هَوَآءُ

380. *Salvation! Salvation! I implore you. My heart*
is vacuous—from all my sins, weightless.

قَدْ تَمَسَّكْتُ مِنْ وِدَادِكَ بِٱلْحَبْـ
ـلِ ٱلَّذِي ٱسْتَمْسَكَتْ بِهِ ٱلشُّفَعَآءُ

381. *Out of loving devotion, I cling to that rope*
to which intercessors on that day will cling.

وَأَبَىٰ ٱللَّهُ أَنْ يَمَسَّنِيَ ٱلسُّوٓ
ءُ بِحَالٍ وَلِي إِلَيْكَ ٱلْتِجَآءُ

382. *God will not allow foulness to afflict me*
in any way as long as I have you for refuge.

IMAM AL-BŪṢĪRĪ'S HOPE

قَدْ رَجَوْنَاكَ لِلْأُمُورِ ٱلَّتِي أَبْـ
ـرَدُهَا فِي فُؤَادِنَا رَمْضَآءُ

383. *Our hopes are in you regarding grave sins,*
the least of them sets our hearts ablaze.

وَأَتَيْنَآ إِلَيْكَ أَنْضَآءَ فَقْرٍ
حَمَلَتْنَآ إِلَى ٱلْغِنَىٰ أَنْضَآءُ

384. *To you we come, starved of deeds, carried*
on starved steeds, in hopes of enrichment.

وَانْطَوَتْ فِي الصُّدُورِ حَاجَاتُ نَفْسٍ
مَا لَهَا عَنْ نَدَى يَدَيْكَ انْطِوَاءُ

385. *Shrouded in the breasts are the needs of our souls*
that can never be without need of your hand's gifts.

فَأَغِثْنَا يَا مَنْ هُوَ الْغَوْثُ وَالْغَيْـ
ـثُ إِذَا أَجْهَدَ الْوَرَى اللَّأْوَاءُ

386. *Come to our rescue, O refuge and relief—*
when agony grips all who are mere mortals,

وَالْجَوَادُ الَّذِي بِهِ تُفْرَجُ الْغُمَّـ
ـةُ عَنَّا وَتُكْشَفُ الْحَوْبَاءُ

387. *Bounteous one, dissipator of distress—*
by you terror is deterred and sins unseated;

يَا رَحِيمًا بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا مَا
ذَهِلَتْ عَنْ أَبْنَائِهَا الرُّحَمَاءُ

388. *O guardian of believers on the day when*
gracious folk, stupefied, forgo their offspring,

يَا شَفِيعًا فِي ٱلْمُذْنِبِينَ إِذَا أَشْـ
فَقَ مِنْ خَوْفِ ذَنْبِهِ ٱلْبُرَآءُ

389. *O intercessor on behalf of the sinners on a day*
when even the sinless are fearful of their foibles—

IMAM AL-BŪSĪRĪ LAMENTS HIS SINS

جُدْ لِعَاصٍ وَمَا سِوَايَ هُوَ ٱلْعَا
صِي وَلَـٰكِنْ تَنْكِيرِيَ ٱسْتِحْيَآءُ

390. *Give grace to a sinner—that sinner is none other*
than me, though my shame aims for anonymity.

وَتَدَارَكْهُ بِٱلْعِنَايَةِ مَا دَا
مَ لَهُ بِٱلذِّمَامِ مِنْكَ ذَمَاءُ

391. *Handle him with care and concern, as long as*
he clings to the last vestige of hope in you.

أَخَّرَتْهُ ٱلْأَعْمَالُ وَٱلْمَالُ عَمَّا
قَدَّمَ ٱلصَّالِحُونَ وَٱلْأَغْنِيَآءُ

392. *Sins and stinginess delayed him on this path*
that propels the righteous and worthy forward.

كُلَّ يَوْمٍ ذُنُوبُهُ صَاعِدَاتٌ
وَعَلَيْهَا أَنْفَاسُهُ صُعَدَاءُ

393. *Every day his sins ascend above for a reckoning,*
and on their account, his anxious sighs also rise.

أَلِفَ ٱلْبِطْنَةَ ٱلْمُبَطِّئَةَ ٱلسَّيْـ
ـرَ بِدَارٍ بِهَا ٱلْبِطَانُ بِطَاءُ

394. *Used to filling his belly, he hobbles his progress*
in a realm where potbellies merely plod along.

فَبَكَى ذَنْبَهُ بِقَسْوَةِ قَلْبٍ
نَهَتِ ٱلدَّمْعَ فَٱلْبُكَاءُ مُكَاءُ

395. *He weeps over his sins with a hardness of heart*
that stifles tears, and his cries could well be whistles.

وَغَدَا يَعْتِبُ ٱلْقَضَاءَ وَلَا عُذْ
رَ لِعَاصٍ فِيمَا يَسُوقُ ٱلْقَضَاءُ

396. *Then he proceeds to cast blame upon fate, though*
sinners have no excuse in a "destiny-dealt hand."[71]

اَوْثَقَتْهُ مِنَ ٱلذُّنُوبِ دُيُونٌ
شَدَّدَتْ فِي ٱقْتِضَآئِهَا ٱلْغُرَمَآءُ

397. *Sin-born debts seem to bind and bar him,*
as if creditors clamor for their collection.

مَا لَهُ حِيلَةٌ سِوَىٰ حِيلَةِ ٱلْمُوْ
ثَقِ إِمَّا تَوَسُّلٌ اَوْ دُعَاءُ

398. *With no ploys to parry them, his last resort*
is that of the shackled: petition and prayer,

رَاجِيًا اَنْ يَعُودَ اَعْمَالُهُ ٱلسُّو
ءُ بِغُفْرَانِ ٱللّٰهِ وَهْيَ هَبَآءُ

399. *Hoping that his deviant deeds transmute,*
by God's awful grace, into mere motes,

اَوْ تُرَىٰ سَيِّئَاتُهُ حَسَنَاتٍ
فَيُقَالُ ٱسْتَحَالَتِ ٱلصَّهْبَآءُ

400. *Or that his misdeeds will be seen as merits,*
as it's said, "Wine transmutes to vinegar,"

كُلُّ أَمْرٍ تُعْنَى بِهِ تُقْلَبُ الْأَعْـ
ـيَانُ فِيهِ وَتَعْجَبُ الْبُصَرَآءُ

401. *For concerns that you attend to are transfigured*
in ways that leave the insightful spellbound.

رُبَّ عَيْنٍ تَفَلْتَ فِي مَآئِهَا الْمِلْـ
ـحِ فَأَضْحَى وَهْوَ الْفُرَاتُ الرَّوَآءُ

402. *How many brackish springs your spittle blessed,*
their waters turning sweet and thirst slaking!

آهِ مِمَّا جَنَيْتُ إِنْ كَانَ يُغْنِي
أَلِفٌ مِنْ عَظِيمِ ذَنْبٍ وَهَآءُ

403. *Ah, for the wrongs I've wrought! If only a and aitch*
could make ample amends for such immense sins!

أَرْتَجِي التَّوْبَةَ النَّصُوحَ وَفِي الْقَلْـ
ـبِ نِفَاقٌ وَفِي اللِّسَانِ رِيَآءُ

404. *I desire an artless repentance, but in my heart is*
hypocrisy and on my tongue dissemblance.

وَمَتَى يَسْتَقِيمُ قَلْبِي وَلِلْجِسْـ
ـمِ ٱعْوِجَاجٌ مِنْ كَبْرَتِي وَٱنْحِنَآءُ

405. *When will my heart be upright now that my body*
finds itself twisted, with a back bent and bowed?

كُنْتُ فِي نَوْمَةِ ٱلشَّبَابِ فَمَا ٱسْتَـ
ـيْقَظْتُ إِلَّا وَلِمَّتِي شَمْطَآءُ

406. *I slumbered in youth's wantonness only to awake*
wearied with a beard grown drab and gray.

وَتَمَادَيْتُ أَقْتَفِي أَثَرَ ٱلْقَوْ
ـمِ فَطَالَتْ مَسَافَةٌ وَٱقْتِفَآءُ

407. *I then set out to trace the path of the folk*[72]*—*
but great was the distance and too far to follow.

فَوَرَا ٱلسَّآئِرِينَ وَهْوَ أَمَامِي
سُبُلٌ وَعْرَةٌ وَأَرْضٌ عَرَآءُ

408. *Far behind those wayfarers, before me*
lay rough roads and vast voids of land.

حَمِدَ ٱلْمُدْلِجُونَ غِبَّ سُرَاهُمْ
وَكَفَىٰ مَنْ تَخَلَّفَ ٱلْإِبْطَآءُ

409. *Those night travelers extol their journey's end,*
while lagging only leaves a lingerer's lament.

رِحْلَةٌ لَمْ يَزَلْ يُفَنِّدُنِى ٱلصَّيْـ
فُ إِذَا مَا نَوَيْتُهَا وَٱلشِّتَآءُ

410. *Each time I intend to set out on that journey,*
every summer and winter belies my resolve.

يَتَّقِى حُرُّ وَجْهِىَ ٱلْحَرَّ وَٱلْبَرْ
دَ وَقَدْ عَزَّ مِنْ لَظَى ٱلْإِتِّقَآءُ

411. *My face evades heat's blaze and frost's bite—*
but it's much harder to avoid hell's flames!

DESPAIR OF SALVATION

ضِقْتُ ذَرْعًا مِمَّا جَنَيْتُ فَيَوْمِى
قَمْطَرِيرٌ وَلَيْلَتِى دَرْعَآءُ

412. *The wrongs I've wrought leave me weary;*
my days are grim and my nights gloomy.

وَتَذَكَّرْتُ رَحْمَةَ ٱللَّهِ فَٱلْبِشْـ
ـرُ لِوَجْهِيَ أَنَّى ٱنْتَحَى تِلْقَآءُ

413. *Then I recall the grace of God, and suddenly,*
such joy returns to my face wherever I turn.

فَأَلَحَّ ٱلرَّجَآءُ وَٱلْخَوْفُ بِٱلْقَلْـ
ـبِ وَلِلْخَوْفِ وَٱلرَّجَا إِلْحَآءُ

414. *Then hope and fear take hold of my heart—*
there fear and hope compete and contend.

THE MERCY OF GOD

صَاحِ لَا تَأْسَ إِنْ ضَعُفْتَ عَنِ ٱلطَّا
عَةِ وَٱسْتَأْثَرَتْ بِهَا ٱلْأَقْوِيَآءُ

415. *My friend, despair not from debility in devotion*
and deeds stronger souls saved for themselves.

إِنَّ لِلَّهِ رَحْمَةً وَأَحَقُّ ٱلنَّـ
ـاسِ مِنْهُ بِٱلرَّحْمَةِ ٱلضُّعَفَآءُ

416. *For God possesses vast grace and compassion,*
and who warrants that more than weaklings?

فَأَبْقَ فِي ٱلْعُرْجِ عِنْدَ مُنْقَلَبِ ٱلذَّوْ
دِ فَفِي ٱلْعَوْدِ تَسْبِقُ ٱلْعَرْجَاءُ

417. *Stay with lame camels returning from grazing;*
for when caravans return, the lame one leads.

لَا تَقُلْ حَاسِدًا لِغَيْرِكَ هَٰذَا
أَثْمَرَتْ نَخْلُهُ وَنَخْلِي عَفَاءُ

418. *Do not grumble, envious of what others have:*
"This one's palm fruited; mine stayed barren."

وَأْتِ بِٱلْمُسْتَطَاعِ مِنْ عَمَلِ ٱلْبِرِّ
فَقَدْ يُسْقِطُ ٱلثِّمَارَ ٱلْإِتَاءُ

419. *Do what you can of righteous deeds;*
even a small palm can produce dates.

SEEKING AID THROUGH THE PROPHET ﷺ

وَبِحُبِّ ٱلنَّبِيِّ فَٱبْغِ رِضَا ٱللَّهِ
فَفِي حُبِّهِ ٱلرِّضَا وَٱلْحِبَاءُ

420. *Through the Prophet's love, seek God's grace;*
for in his love resides beatitude and blessing.

يَا نَبِيَّ ٱلْهُدَى ٱسْتِغَاثَةُ مَلْهُوْ
فٍ اَضَرَّتْ بِحَالِهِ ٱلْحَوْبَآءُ

421. *O guiding Prophet, aid this perplexed soul,*
whose misdeeds mar the state of his spirit.

يَدَّعِي ٱلْحُبَّ وَهْوَ يَأْمُرُ بِٱلسُّوٓ
ءِ وَمَنْ لِيْ اَنْ تَصْدُقَ ٱلرَّغْبَآءُ

422. *He claims love while enjoining his soul to sin!*
On whom can I rely to realize my heart's desire?

اَيُّ حُبٍّ يَصِحُّ مِنْهُ وَطَرْفِي
لِلْكَرَى وَاصِلٌ وَطَيْفُكَ رَآءُ

423. *How sound is a love of one whose eye forever sleeps,*
while a vision of you is as far from him as rā' from Wāṣil![73]

لَيْتَ شِعْرِيَ اَذَاكَ مِنْ عُظْمِ ذَنْبٍ
اَمْ حُظُوظُ ٱلْمُتَيَّمِينَ حِظَآءُ

424. *Would that I knew was it a grave wrong I wrought,*
or are shares allotted to the besotted randomly?

إِنْ يَكُنْ عِظَمُ زَلَّتِى حَجَبَ رُؤْيَا
كَ فَقَدْ عَزَّ دَآءَ قَلْبِىَ ٱلدَّوَآءُ

425. *If it be my enormities that veil me from your vision,*
then what hope remains for curing my heart's ills?

كَيْفَ يَصْدَىٰ بِٱلذَّنْبِ قَلْبُ مُحِبٍّ
وَلَهُ ذِكْرُكَ ٱلْجَمِيلُ جِلَآءُ

426. *How can the heart of a lover rust in ruinous sin*
if the mention of your beauties burnishes it?

هَٰذِهِ عِلَّتِى وَأَنْتَ طَبِيبِى
لَيْسَ يَخْفَىٰ عَلَيْكَ فِى ٱلْقَلْبِ دَآءُ

427. *I've laid bare my malady, and you are my medic;*
and no heart's hidden disease can hide from you.

وَمِنَ ٱلْفَوْزِ أَنْ أَبُثَّكَ شَكْوَىٰ
هِىَ شَكْوَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَهْىَ ٱقْتِضَآءُ

428. *In a sense, it's a success to state my complaint,*
a complaint addressed to you besides a petition:

ضُمِّنَتْهَا مَدَآئِحٌ مُسْتَطَابٌ
فِيكَ مِنْهَا ٱلْمَدِيحُ وَٱلْإِصْغَآءُ

429. *This complaint wrapped in paeans, pleasing in praise,*
these accolades that laud you, enchanting the ears.

قَلَّ مَا حَاوَلَتْ مَدِيحَكَ إِلَّا
سَاعَدَتْهَا مِيمٌ وَدَالٌ وَحَآءُ

430. *Rarely has my plea attempted to praise you*
without aid from the letters mīm, dāl, and ḥā'.[74]

SURPASSING ALL OTHERS IN PRAISE OF THE PROPHET ﷺ

حُقَّ لِي فِيكَ أَنْ أُسَاجِلَ قَوْمًا
سُلِّمَتْ مِنْهُمُ لِدَلْوِي ٱلدِّلَآءُ

431. *For you, I'm justified to jostle others over a wellspring,*
where their pails are set aside for my praise pail.

إِنَّ لِي غَيْرَةً وَقَدْ زَاحَمَتْنِي
فِي مَعَانِي مَدِيحِكَ ٱلشُّعَرَآءُ

432. *I possess a zeal to compete with other poets*
who seek to surpass me in ways of praise.

وَلِقَلْبِي فِيكَ ٱلْغُلُوُّ وَأَنَّىٰ
لِلِسَانِي فِي مَدْحِكَ ٱلْغُلَوَآءُ

433. *My heart holds such extreme love for you:*
How can my tongue keep up with your praise?

فَأَثِبْ خَاطِرًا يَلَذُّ لَهُ مَدْ
حُكَ عِلْمًا بِأَنَّهُ ٱللَّأْلَآءُ

434. *Reward this mind that delights in your laudation,*
knowing therein lies the heart's illumination,

جَاكَ مِنْ صَنْعَةِ ٱلْقَرِيضِ بُرُودًا
لَكَ لَمْ تَحْكِ وَشْيَهَا صَنْعَآءُ

435. *The mind that wove verses like fine Yemeni cloth,*
such handiwork never seen in the city of Sanaa.[75]

أَعْجَزَ ٱلدُّرَّ نَظْمُهُ فَٱسْتَوَتْ فِيْ
هِ ٱلْيَدَانِ ٱلصَّنَاعُ وَٱلْخَرْقَآءُ

436. *My poetry robs pearls of their power to dazzle:*
equal are the hands of the artful and the artless.

فَٱرْضَهُ أَفْصَحَ ٱمْرِئٍ نَطَقَ ٱلضَّا
دَ فَقَامَتْ تَغَارُ مِنْهَا ٱلظَّآءُ

437. *Accept it, O most eloquent one in uttering ḍād*
such that the letter ẓā' succumbed to jealousy.[76]

أَبِذِكْرِ ٱلْآيَاتِ أُوفِيكَ مَدْحًا
أَيْنَ مِنِّي وَأَيْنَ مِنْهَا ٱلْوَفَاءُ

438. *Could I, in recounting your wonders, do justice?*
How vast the chasm between me and that task!

أَمْ أُمَارِي بِهِنَّ قَوْمَ نَبِيٍّ
سَآءَ مَا ظَنَّهُ بِيَ ٱلْأَغْبِيَآءُ

439. *Or am I just wrangling with other eulogizers?*
What fools they be with such cynical thoughts!

THE NATION OF THE PROPHET ﷺ

وَلَكَ ٱلْأُمَّةُ ٱلَّتِي غَبَطَتْهَا
بِكَ لَمَّآ أَتَيْتَهَا ٱلْأَنْبِيَآءُ

440. *Your nation—the one to whom you were sent—*
is one that even prophets wished to be among.

لَمْ تَخَفْ بَعْدَكَ ٱلضَّلَالَ وَفِينَا
وَارِثُو نُورِ هَدْيِكَ ٱلْعُلَمَآءُ

441. *After you, we fear no misguidance, since with us*
are the scholars, inheritors of your light's guidance.

فَٱنْقَضَتْ آيُ ٱلْأَنْبِيَآءِ وَآيَا
تُكَ فِي ٱلنَّاسِ مَا لَهُنَّ ٱنْقِضَآءُ

442. *Previous prophets' miracles faded with time,*
but your signs fade not for all humanity.

وَٱلْكَرَامَاتُ مِنْهُمُ مُعْجِزَاتٌ
حَازَهَا مِنْ نَوَالِكَ ٱلْأَوْلِيَآءُ

443. *And wonders at the hands of any saints*
are in reality more of your hand's wonders.

إِنَّ مِنْ مُعْجِزَاتِكَ ٱلْعَجْزَ عَنْ وَصْـ
فِكَ إِذْ لَا يَحُدُّهُ ٱلْإِحْصَآءُ

444. *Indeed, among your miracles is our incapacity*
to describe you: for limits cannot delimit you!

كَيْفَ يَسْتَوْعِبُ ٱلْكَلَامُ سَجَايَا
كَ وَهَلْ تَنْزَحُ ٱلْبِحَارَ ٱلرِّكَاءُ

445. *How could words encompass your qualities?*
Can dippers diminish or ladle the ocean dry?

لَيْسَ مِنْ غَايَةٍ لِوَصْفِكَ أَبْغِي
هَا وَلِلْقَوْلِ غَايَةٌ وَٱنْتِهَاءُ

446. *Never did I desire to limit your description,*
as words have their limits and limitations.

إِنَّمَا فَضْلُكَ ٱلزَّمَانُ وَآيَا
تُكَ فِيمَا نَعُدُّهُ ٱلْآنَاءُ

447. *Your virtues span the entirety of time itself,*
while the wonders recollected here only moments.

لَمْ أُطِلْ فِي تَعْدَادِ مَدْحِكَ نُطْقِي
وَمُرَادِي بِذَلِكَ ٱسْتِقْصَاءُ

448. *I did not prolong my display of your character*
intending to give some detailed delineation:

غَيْرَ أَنِّي ظَمْآنُ وَجْدٍ وَمَا لِي
بِقَلِيلٍ مِنَ ٱلْوُرُودِ ٱرْتِوَآءُ

449. *It comes from a passionate thirst for your praise,*
and I can't slake my desire with shallow draughts.

SALUTATIONS UPON THE PROPHET ﷺ

فَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ تَتْرَى مِنَ ٱللّٰهِ
وَتَبْقَى بِهِ لَكَ ٱلْبَأْوَآءُ

450. *And so, God's peace be upon you over and again,*
and by that peace, may your glory forever endure.

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ مِنْكَ فَمَا غَيـ
ـرُكَ مِنْهُ لَكَ ٱلسَّلَامُ كِفَآءُ

451. *A peace to you from you; for no mortal's peace*
offered to you except your own would suffice;

وَسَلَامٌ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا خَلَقَ ٱللّٰهُ
لِتَحْيَا بِذِكْرِكَ ٱلْأَمْلَآءُ

452. *Peace from all God's creation so that your*
remembrance animates every assembly,

وَصَلَاةٌ كَالْمِسْكِ تَحْمِلُهُ مِنِّـ
ـيَ شَمَالٌ إِلَيْكَ أَوْ نَكْبَاءُ

453. And prayers of perfumed musk carried
by Boreas and Eurus from me to you,[77]

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى ضَرِيحِكَ تَخْضَلُّ
بِهِ مِنْهُ تُرْبَةٌ وَعْسَاءُ

454. A peace like water on your sanctified sepulcher;
from it, may its soft soil remain forever moist—

وَثَنَاءً قَدَّمْتُ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ نَجْـ
ـوَايَ إِذْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَدَىَّ ثَرَاءُ

455. These eulogies I have offered in the presence of
my petition because I possess no wealth to give—

مَا أَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ مَنْ عَبَدَ اللّٰهَ
وَقَامَتْ بِرَبِّهَا الْأَشْيَاءُ

456. As long as God is adored and prayers are prayed,
and all things, through their Lord, will subsist.

Annotations

1. This refers to knowledge of the unseen God unveiled to the Prophet ﷺ, which includes the essence of the original names taught to Adam. Through the Prophet ﷺ, we learned of the Pen, the Tablet, the Throne, and many other unseen realities. In a hadith narrated by Imam Aḥmad, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "I was given access to the unseen except for these five" and then quoted the Qur'anic verse 31:34, which mentions the five: "It is God who has the knowledge of the end of time, and who showers the rain, and who knows what is in the wombs. No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die: but God is omniscient, completely aware." The Prophet's companions, aware he had knowledge of the unseen, would often respond to the Prophet's questions with the refrain, "God and His Messenger know best!"

2. This refers to the Zoroastrian temples of Persia, wherein fire was seen as an agent of purification.

3. According to Abū Nuʻaym in *Dalāʼil al-nubuwwah*, al-Shaffāʼ (the mother of the Prophet's companion ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʻAwf) was present at the Prophet's birth and heard the angels bless him. For years, she kept secret knowledge of those angelic blessings; when the Prophet ﷺ announced his prophecy, she was among the first to accept his message. She then shared that she had heard the angelic blessings at the time of his blessed birth.

4. This refers to the vision of the Prophet's mother: her house was in the Hollow (al-Baṭḥāʼ), which is a name of the valley of Mecca; due to the Prophet's world-illuminating light, she had a vision of the palaces of Greater Syria from her house.

5. Ḥalīmah of the Hawāzin tribe became the Prophet's wet nurse when she alone, among the many wet nurses of Banū Saʻd (a branch of the Hawāzin), chose to take him even though he was an orphan. Noblewomen of the Quraysh customarily sent their suckling babies to be nursed in the desert of Banū Saʻd near Mecca; when the wet nurses from there had arrived in Mecca to acquire babies to nurse, Ḥalīmah's milk production was low due to drought and her limited resources. None of the Qurayshī noblewomen seeking wet nurses chose her due to her poverty, and none of the other wet nurses chose to take the infant Muhammad ﷺ due to his being an orphan. By the end of the day, Ḥalīmah, seeing baby Muhammad ﷺ, said to her husband, "Let's take the orphan, for perhaps God will grant us blessings from his care." Upon taking the child, she immediately felt her breast fill with milk. From then on, she produced more milk than the other wet nurses, and her livestock produced more milk than those of the others in her clan. Moreover, the emaciated donkey she was riding upon, which had lagged behind on the way to Mecca, was now leading the pack on the way back, speeding ahead. When the other women commented on the sudden increase in her donkey's energy, Ḥalīmah responded, "I'm carrying a blessed child."

6. When the Prophet ﷺ was a boy, angels came to him, split his chest, removed his heart, and cleansed it in a solution of iced Zamzam water. When the sons of Ḥalīmah (the wet nurse from Banū Sa'd) who witnessed the angelic operation ran home to their mother and relayed what had happened, she grew fearful for the boy ﷺ and decided to return him to his family.

7. This refers to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the paternal grandfather of the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet's father, 'Abd Allāh, died before he was born, so 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib became his guardian.

8. Upon seeing her husband ﷺ in such an agitated state, Lady Khadījah ؓ realized that to help him she needed to determine whether the spirit he could see was pure or malevolent: she knew that angels, out of their modesty, leave when women unveil their hair.

9. This refers to the Ethiopian governor of Yemen, Abrahah, who led an army with elephants toward Mecca intending to destroy the Kaaba after his church had been desecrated by an Arab. Upon reaching the outskirts of Mecca, his lead elephant named Maḥmūd refused to march ahead, causing all the other elephants to stop.

10. Surāqah was one of Arabia's greatest trackers; leaders of the Quraysh offered him a reward of a hundred camels if he could track the Prophet ﷺ as he fled from Mecca to Medina on the hegira that changed the course of history. Despite his skills and horsemanship, all of Surāqah's efforts were miraculously thwarted; he later became Muslim and witnessed the miracle of the Prophet's prediction that he would wear the bracelets of the ruler of Persia.

11. "Muṣṭafā" means "the Chosen One" and is among the over two hundred names attributed to the Prophet ﷺ.

12. The Burāq is a wondrous creature provided for the prophets on journeys of great distance; it is similar to a horse, though slightly smaller. The lines here allude to Imam al-Bukhārī's narration that the Burāq accompanied the Prophet ﷺ on his Night Ascension; according to another narration, the Prophet ﷺ rode the Burāq only to Jerusalem, at which point a magnificent ladder, like Jacob's Ladder before him, appeared, enabling the Prophet ﷺ to ascend to the supernal world beyond time and space. According to Imam Ibn Ḥajar, the two narrations are reconcilable.

13. This refers to the Qur'anic description of the Prophet's nearness to God on the Night Ascension (see 53:9). Muslim scholars understand this nearness to be outside of spatial considerations, as God is beyond time and space.

14. These five men were deemed "the mockers" because they relentlessly disparaged and attempted to humiliate the Prophet ﷺ. Those who disagreed with or debated the Prophet ﷺ but did so with respect were not singled out; only those who mocked and revealed their despicable character were thus labeled. The calamities that befell them were predicted by the Qur'anic verse "Truly We shall suffice you against those who mock you" (15:95).

15. This refers to the five noble young men who rejected the Quraysh's unjust boycott of the Banū Hāshim clan. As the Prophet's followers grew in number, other clans of the Quraysh boycotted his clan and refused to sell them necessary food items, forcing them to eat the leaves of trees. After two years of the ban, these five just men refused to continue persecuting the fledgling Muslim community. They met with the Qurayshī leaders at the Kaaba and convinced them to end the ban. When the Qurayshī leaders entered the Kaaba to remove the vellum document that had ratified the ban, they found only the name of God on a small piece of what remained of the document; the rest had been eaten by termites.

16. This refers to the Qur'anic story (see 34:14) of Solomon's death. The djinn saw Solomon ﵇ standing in what appeared to be prayer; they realized he was actually dead only after termites had gnawed away at his staff, causing Solomon's body to fall to the ground.

17. A clan relative of the Prophet ﷺ and among his worst enemies, Abū Jahl intended to assault the Prophet ﷺ at the Kaaba, but when he came upon the Prophet ﷺ, he was confronted by an enormous camel ready to bite him, so he fled in fear.

18. Al-Irāshī was a Bedouin merchant who came to sell camels in Mecca. Abū Jahl bought them on credit and then delayed payment, so al-Irāshī sought help from the Qurayshī leaders at the Kaaba. Not wanting to help him, as a joke, leaders of the Quraysh told him that only Muhammad ﷺ could help him. When he went to the Prophet ﷺ and asked for help, the Prophet ﷺ took him to Abū Jahl's house and asked Abū Jahl to make the overdue payment. Miraculously, Abū Jahl was struck with such fear that he immediately paid the man.

19. "The firewood carrier" refers to Umm Jamīl, the spouse of the Prophet's paternal uncle; she used to place thorns in the Prophet's path to vex him. The Qur'an revealed one of the last chapters about her and her husband, Abū Lahab (see 111:1–5). It is an early Meccan chapter that predicted both of them would never embrace Islam.

20. This refers to the Jewish woman who attempted to feed the Prophet ﷺ poisoned lamb. He was alerted through a miracle. When confronted by him, she explained her reasoning: if he were a true prophet, she knew he would have been alerted, and if he were a false one, she would have rid the world of an imposter. The Prophet ﷺ chose to forgive her.

21. The Prophet's wet nurses were of the Hawāzin clan. Ḥalīmah was the wet nurse who took him from Mecca into the desert of Banū Sa'd (see note 5).

22. Lahaina Noon, also known as a "zero shadow" day, occurs twice a year in the tropics. When the sun reaches its zenith at solar noon, it passes directly overhead the place below, casting no observable shadows.

23. Here, the poet draws a parallel between the splitting of the Prophet's chest, which occurred on five different occasions according to some narrations, and the splitting of the moon that took place in response to a challenge made by the pagans of Mecca. The imam uses a double entendre with the word *sharṭ*, which means both "incision" and "condition." Hence, the line could be read as "the condition of every stipulation is a benefit" as well as "the condition for any incision is some gain garnered such as a healing." In other words, just as a surgeon only cuts a patient with the patient's reward of being healed, the Prophet ﷺ was recompensed for the fear and pain he suffered when his chest was split with the miracle of the splitting of the moon.

24. The Prophet ﷺ used to climb Ḥirā', a mountain outside of Mecca, to pray and meditate. Once, when he began to pray on Mount Ḥirā' with Abū Bakr and 'Umar ؓ, the mountain started to tremor. The Prophet ﷺ struck it with his foot and said, "Be still, for upon you is a prophet, a zaddik, and a martyr."

25. The Prophet ﷺ was wounded in a battle that left a scar in the shape of a crescent on his brow. It had a beauty of its own that concealed the original beauty of his brow.

26. This refers to Salmān the Persian, who was born a Zoroastrian and, in seeking the truth, embraced Christianity and served a monk in Syria. The monk told him that the last prophet of God would arrive soon in Arabia, so he set out for Arabia. On his way, he was unjustly enslaved and sold to a Jew in Medina. Upon finding the Prophet ﷺ, Salmān tested him three times based on signs given to him by the monk. The Prophet ﷺ fulfilled all three, so Salmān converted to Islam. The Prophet ﷺ then purchased Salmān's freedom by planting for the Jewish owner an orchard of date palms that fruited miraculously in a year.

27. As legend has it, Zarqā' al-Yamāmah was a pre-Islamic Arabian woman who could see an army as far as two days away. Like Cassandra of Greek mythology, her people ignored her, but she became proverbial for great eyesight.

28. When the Prophet's companion Qatādah sustained a severe eye injury, causing his eyeball to be dislodged, the Prophet ﷺ restored the eye to its socket, and Qatādah's sight returned keener than before the injury.

29. Muslims know well the powerful scent of the blood of martyrs. In the cave on Mount Uḥud where the Prophet ﷺ sought refuge after being wounded in battle, a powerful scent of musk emanates to this day from the rocks where his blessed blood fell. On any day with a western breeze, this scent can also be perceived on the eastern side of the grave of Ḥamzah, the martyred uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, as many have attested.

30. Al-Khansā' bt. 'Amr was a legendary poetess noted for dirges lamenting her slain brothers, Ṣakhr and Mu'āwiyah. She was singled out by Imam al-Būṣīrī due to her extraordinarily eloquent and powerful poetry, as well as her remarkable beauty. The Prophet ﷺ wept upon hearing one of her dirges written for her brother Ṣakhr.

31. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *Judaist* as "a person who follows or favours Jewish practice or ritual." The term includes both the religious practitioners of Judaism as well as those who favor or support it, such as Christian Zionists. I am using it here to translate the Arabic *Yahūd*, which usually denotes "Jews." The word "Jews" presents several problems, foremost among them is that it designates both an adherent to a religion as well as an ethnicity. The use of the original Arabic term in the poem refers to wayward adherents to the religion and not an ethnic group. Not all Judaists are Jews, and not all Jews are Judaists. To use "Jews" here would clearly be antisemitic, as most people associate the word with an ethnic group. Judaism, however, is a truth claim, and like truth claims of any religion or ideology, it must remain open to criticism of both its doctrines and any harm its followers may inflict on others due to its doctrines, whether that harm results from an accurate or a distorted interpretation of their respective beliefs (see the introduction to this book).

32. At the heart of halakha (Judaic law) are the unchangeable 613 mitzvot (commandments from God) in the Torah for Jewish people to follow. The concept of their immutability comes from Deuteronomy 4:2, which says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (KJV).

33. This refers to the transformations visited upon disobedient people, such as the wife of Lot being transmuted into a pillar of salt and, in the Talmudic tractate of Sanhedrin, God's transformation of a group of the builders of Babel's tower into apes (see the William Davidson Edition, *Talmud*, Sanhedrin 109a).

34. This likely refers to Genesis 6:6, "The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth" (NIV). The line can be interpreted a few ways. According to Sulaymān al-Jamal, the poet here is pointing out two possibilities in the rabbinical position about the impossibility of change: If they say God regretted creating Adam, it indicates a change in God's decree and lack of divine foreknowledge. If they say that it's a mistake from their Book, they're admitting their religion contains mistakes.

35. The poet here is commenting on the notion of abrogation by using this analogy of God's sign in abrogating the night with day and the night's restoration. The revelation of God is twofold: the signs of the cosmos and the signs of God's Books (*takwīnī* and *tadwīnī*). The Judaists claim that God does not abrogate His signs. Thus, the abrogation of previous prophets' revelation is analogous to the change of night into day. To deny the change of cosmic signs leaves one denying what everyone experiences every day. The poet posits two explanations here: either God forgot He doesn't abrogate when He abrogated the night with the day, and thus He must restore the night again upon remembering, which is absurd; or abrogation is part of the divine plan. In other words, according to their claim of no abrogation, a constant restoration of night occurs due to God's "forgetfulness."

36. While the poet indicates that Abraham's son Isaac was the one to be sacrificed, Muslim scholars differ as to whether the son in question was Isaac or Ishmael.

The early majority opinion, including that of Imam 'Alī, holds that Isaac was the intended sacrifice, while the later verifiers (*muḥaqqiqūn*) among the scholars held that it was Ishmael, and God knows best. Most likely, the poet chose Isaac because he is addressing the Judaists here who all agree that Isaac was chosen for the sacrifice. Again, the poet's argument exposes the contradiction of the Judaists' claim that God doesn't abrogate, given a ram replaced Isaac.

37. This refers to the original law given to Adam and Eve: each of Eve's pregnancies consisted of twins, a male and a female, and the male of the one pregnancy could marry only the female of Eve's following pregnancy and not the twin of the same one. After the species multiplied, the practice was abrogated and ruled incest.

38. The Sabbath is the mandated Jewish day of rest. The poet, in this invective against the Judaists, refers to Wednesday because according to their tradition, God created light on Wednesday. Hence, the light would have provided guidance, and they would not have missed the light of the Prophet ﷺ. The poet's point is facetious in the tradition of the Arabic invective, which used barbs to unsettle the object of the poet's diatribe.

39. This line refers to the Battle of the Confederates, also known as the Battle of the Trench, in which the Jewish tribe of Qurayẓah, while bound by a treaty with the Muslim polity, was persuaded to violate the agreement with the Prophet ﷺ and join a confederation of his enemies who aimed to eradicate the Muslim population. In the end, the Confederates withdrew, abandoning the Qurayẓah tribe despite their prior guarantees to the contrary.

40. This verse refers to the expulsion of the Jewish tribe of Naḍīr from Medina after plotting to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ. Initially, they were promised support by the hypocrites, led by 'Abd Allāh b. Ubayy; however, when the time came, the latter provided no support against the Muslims.

41. Aḥmad is another of the many names of the Prophet ﷺ. It is a superlative of "the Praised One."

42. In Arabic, many words containing the bilabial letter *mīm* (which makes an *m* sound) may also be said with the bilabial letter *bā'* (which makes the *b* sound). For example, Mecca, the name of the sacred city of Arabia, can also be said as Becca. If such transposition were applied to the word *sabb*, which means "curse," it would transpose into *samm*, which means "poison."

43. Zenobia, or al-Zabbā', as Arab legend has it, was a queen of Iraq and Syria who attempted to fool her rival but in the end was fooled by him. When he entered her palace to kill her, she drank poison and said, "By my hand, not by yours."

44. These are the two pathways near hillsides by which the Prophet's army entered Mecca. The Prophet ﷺ entered from Mount Ḥajūn's side, and he sent a smaller force led by Khālid b. al-Walīd to enter from Mount Kudā''s side.

45. This verse is exceedingly difficult to render into English. The poet is playing on Arabic terms used in ordinary language and in the technical terms of prosody, such as *bayt*, which means both "house" and "a line of poetry"; *ikfā'* means to "overturn" or "invert" but in poetry refers to a fault in the rhyme scheme; and *iqwā'* refers to an empty house but also to variance in the diacritical marks of grammar; hence, this line is a clear case of "lost in translation."

46. This narrative framework emerges out of the *raḥīl* tradition from Jāhilī odes that always included a section extolling the virtues of the she-camel. Here, the poet uses his she-camel as a conceit to personify his own journey. He introduces a geographical account of a pilgrim's medieval journey to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina from Egypt. The places mentioned here and in subsequent verses at the poet's time were stopping points where pilgrims could rest and replenish supplies for the next stage of the journey.

47. For pilgrims traveling from Egypt, Yanbū' is the first station of the journey in the Hejaz region.

48. Al-Zāhir is a place close to Tan'īm where the Mosque of 'Ā'ishah is located; pilgrims on this route stop here to take a ritual bath prior to entering Mecca. Al-Zāhir is the penultimate stopping point for pilgrims before entering Mecca and indicates the sanctuary is at hand.

49. *Ṭawāf* refers to the circling of the Kaaba.

50. The surrounding mountains have brilliant redness to them that the Arabs call *kūfah*, a term for red clay. "Both sides" is a reference to two mountains: Uḥud in the north and 'Ayr in the south. The Prophet ﷺ said that Uḥud is a mountain from paradise, and 'Ayr a mountain from hell, indicating a kind of positive and negative charge to the city's north-south alignment.

51. *Sudor* is a medical term for excessive sweat. The poet chose the rarely used Arabic word *ruḥaḍā'*, which is a profuse sweat brought about specifically due to a fever, as opposed to the more common *'araq*, which translates as simply "sweat" or "perspiration."

52. The Arabs used teknonymy, the practice of referring to one by the name of one's eldest son. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was widely known as Abū al-Qāsim, which means "Father of al-Qāsim."

53. Though the poet's oath omits God's name, it is understood rhetorically by way of an implied omission (*ḥadhf*). Some modern scholars find fault in using the omitted oaths, as the Prophet ﷺ prohibited oaths by other than God, but past scholars understood the exigencies of poetry and poetic license. The intended meaning here is "I swear by the Lord of Eurus [the east wind]."

54. *'Uqāb* means "eagle" in Arabic, and at the Battle of Khaybar, the Prophet ﷺ gave his black standard named "The Eagle" to 'Alī.

55. The "two fragrant ones" refers to the Prophet's grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. The "Radiant Lady" refers to Fāṭimah al-Zahrā', their mother and the Prophet's beloved daughter.

56. Taff and Karbalā', in modern-day Iraq, are where Ḥusayn b. 'Alī, the Prophet's grandson, met his death at the hands of the claimant Yazīd's army. The other grandson, Ḥasan b. 'Alī, was poisoned. Both deaths were predicted by the Prophet ﷺ and remain a source of pain for the Muslim community, as these calamities occurred at the order of other Muslims.

57. The Arabian jerboa, a rodent, lives in a burrow with multiple openings at different ends. If attacked from one, it can flee from another opening. The Arabic word for "hypocrite" is derived from the multi-faced burrow the jerboa lives in enabling it to constantly evade any threat.

58. The events of Karbalā' were avenged somewhat by the Abbasids at al-Zawrā' near Baghdad, in which the Umayyads were defeated, and the Prophet's family restored the caliphate to the Banū Hāshim.

59. Ḥassān b. Thābit was a companion of the Prophet ﷺ and a gifted poet. He is remembered especially for his poems of praise in defense of the Prophet ﷺ. Al-Khansā' was the most noted Jāhilī poetess. Her pre-Islamic poems are mournful dirges that evoke sentiments of her deep pain at the loss of her two brothers from Jāhilī feuds (see note 30).

60. Jesus's close followers were his twelve disciples, and Moses ﵇ appointed twelve tribal chiefs to oversee the twelve tribes of Israel.

61. The Day of the Shelter refers to the fateful day immediately following the passing of the Best of Creation ﷺ, in which his companions gathered in the shelter (*saqīfah*) of Banū Sā'idah. Here, Imam al-Būṣīrī refers to the famous statement of Abū Bakr in which he is reported to have said, "Whoever among you worships Muhammad—Muhammad has died; but whoever worships God—God is the Living and cannot die." He then recited the Qur'anic verse (3:144) "Muhammad is no more than a messenger; other messengers have gone before him. If he were to die or to be killed, would you regress into disbelief?" (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 1241).

62. Abū Ḥafṣ is the teknonym of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ﵁, a masculine version of the name of his daughter Ḥafṣah ﵂, one of the Mothers of the Believers.

63. The context for the pledge of the hands in this verse lies in the '*umrah* (lesser pilgrimage) that the Prophet ﷺ and his companions set out to perform in 6/628. They were initially obstructed, so they camped at Ḥudaybiyah, and the Prophet ﷺ sent 'Uthmān to Mecca as his envoy to negotiate entry into the Holy Sanctuary. While in Mecca, the Quraysh offered 'Uthmān an opportunity to perform *ṭawāf* of the Kaaba, but he declined, not wishing to do so before the Prophet ﷺ arrived. 'Uthmān was detained in Mecca for longer than expected, and rumor reached the Muslim camp that the Quraysh had murdered him. Given that killing an envoy is a

declaration of war, the Prophet ﷺ gathered his companions and bade them pledge to fight to avenge the killing of 'Uthmān. His companions were not armed for battle yet answered the call. The Prophet ﷺ placed his other blessed hand on his own proclaiming it to stand in place of 'Uthmān's hand for the pledge. This event came to be known as the Pledge of the Tree, or, in light of the Qur'anic verse, the Pledge of Divine Contentment (see 48:18).

64. Upon entering Medina, the Prophet ﷺ took each of the Qurayshī Emigrants (Muhājirūn) and made him a brother to one of the Supporters (Anṣār) of Medina. However, despite his cousin 'Alī being from Mecca, the Prophet ﷺ took 'Alī as brother to himself, one of Imam 'Alī's many great honors.

65. Ṭalḥah b. 'Ubayd Allāh is among the first ten converts to Islam as well as the ten singled out for paradise. The poet refers here to the Battle of Uḥud, when all but a handful of the Muslims fled the field; Ṭalḥah was among those who stood their ground and remained to protect the Prophet ﷺ. In deflecting a sword's blow to the Prophet's face, Ṭalḥah's hand was paralyzed.

66. Zubayr is the only companion with the epithet "disciple," given by the Prophet ﷺ.

67. "The noble chief" refers to 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, the first child born after the hegira to Zubayr and Asmā' the daughter of Abū Bakr. The birth of 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was one of great celebration, and he would later lead a resistance movement in Mecca.

68. Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ is the third to embrace Islam and among the six members of the council (*shūrā*). He also counts among the Prophet's ten companions guaranteed paradise. Sa'īd b. Zayd also counts among those ten. "He will be raised as an entire community to himself," said the Prophet ﷺ about Sa'īd.

69. Ḥamzah and al-'Abbās, paternal uncles of the Prophet ﷺ, were especially supportive of his mission.

70. The Prophet ﷺ wrapped 'Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn in his cloak and prayed, "O God, these are my family and my special ones. Remove from them any defilement and purify them completely" (*Tirmidhī*). Hence, they are "the People of the Cloak."

71. The poet adhered to the dominant Sunni school of theology that states that the human being is both determined and free. This paradox between determinism and free will cannot be resolved on one ground of existence; Muslim scholastics understood existence to have degrees. (An analogy for this is the quantum and Newtonian worlds, which operate with different laws of physics; for instance, Newton's first law proves true in everyday experience, but at the quantum level, the law breaks down.) Sulaymān al-Jamal expounds on this line of the poem:

> God has made it the divine wont to show a causal relationship between "causes and effects." Moreover, the effects are attributed to the responsible agent

formally and due to his or her choice in the action, not to mention the fact that for all intents and purposes the agent, outwardly, can do or not do the action. The agent is rewarded or punished based upon this consideration. This is true even though at the same time the agent is determined to do what he or she does. What God wills will happen, and what God does not will, won't happen. Hence, the agent must be aware of both realities: that actions are associated with the agent formally; therefore, praise and blame are warranted [based upon one's actions]. In reality, everything goes back to God concerning the servant's incapacity to do other than what he or she does. This is the theology of the Sunni school, and the schools of the determinists and the libertarians are both false.

72. "The folk" (*qawm*) refers to sincere Muslims who set out on the path of the saints. They were also known in the early community as Sufis. Most of the books of the folk, such as the *Epistle of Imam al-Qushayrī*, lament their disappearance and loss. An early sentiment attributed to one of the folk states, "Sufism was a reality without a name; today it is a name without a reality."

73. The cleverness and subtlety of this verse exemplifies well the poet's genius and illustrates precisely what ranks this poem among Arabic literature's greatest. Unfortunately, due to his use of rhetorical devices specific to Arabic, much is lost in translation. The word "wāṣil" can be used as a person's name as well as an adjective denoting "constant or always." The double entendre enables the poet to use one word to refer to his "constant sleep" as well as the name of a person, in this case, Wāṣil. Well known among the Arab literati, the historical figure Wāṣil b. ʿAṭā' was a rationalist imam who had a famous speech impediment that prevented him from pronouncing the *r* sound. His genius enabled him to speak without ever using a word that contained the Arabic letter *rā'*. Using his name enables the poet to display the very quality Wāṣil was known for: verbal dexterity. In addition to the double entendre, the poet also employs an unusual Qur'anic rhetorical device known as *iltifāt*, which involves changing persons abruptly to heighten a listener's attention. In this case, he switches from first to third person. The line essentially states "How can my love be sound when my eye (*ṭarfī*) is always (*wāṣil*) asleep, and thus a vision of you [i.e. a dream of the Prophet ﷺ] remains as far from me as the letter *rā'* was from Wāṣil!"

74. The word *madḥ* in Arabic, composed of the letters *mīm*, *dāl*, and *ḥā'*, means "praise." The letters also constitute the name of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

75. The finest woven cloth came from Sanaa in western Yemen. Here, the poet likens his weaving of words to cloth finer than Arabia's finest.

76. Arabic is known as "the language of *ḍād*," and *ḍād* is the most difficult letter to pronounce. The Prophet ﷺ was described as the most eloquent of those who enunciated the letter *ḍād*. The letter *ẓā'* is close to *ḍād* in its points of articulation but much easier to pronounce; hence, a common mistake made is to pronounce the *ḍād* as a *ẓā'*, which even some native speakers of Arabic do. The poet uses this as a wonderful conceit in the Arabic verse.

77. Boreas is a name for the northern wind, and Eurus for the eastern wind.

◆

A Note on the Musical Recording

THE HAMZIYYAH, PENNED IN THE thirteenth century by the poet par excellence Imam al-Būṣīrī, is read to this day across the Muslim world. Similarly, the music in this modern recording of that poem—a melodious a cappella rendition by the renowned Fes Singers—tracks back to a virtuoso from the Middle Ages, a polymath and a pioneer of the Arabo-Andalusian music tradition.

In the ninth century, 'Alī b. Nāfi', famously known as Ziryāb, reportedly fled from the Abbasid court in Baghdad and sought refuge among the Umayyads of southern Spain (al-Andalus). He was a masterful musician, a poet, a culinary artist, and a notable bon vivant. He introduced courses in serving meals—soup, main course, dessert—that later became a practice in the courts of Europe and, in the modern era, became normalized across the West in high-end restaurants.

His ingenuity in the arts of music was also consequential and infiltrated societies beyond the Muslim world. He became the court musician of the Umayyad emir of Córdoba 'Abd al-Raḥmān II and introduced many musical and cultural innovations to Spain. These later influenced elite European culture when visitors from France and other places returned and regaled audiences in their Christian courts with tales of their sonorous sojourns through Moorish Spain.

An accomplished lute and oud player, 'Alī b. Nāfi' added a fifth pair of strings to the oud that would evolve into the Spanish guitar. He famously compiled the twenty-four *nūbāt*, or musical changes, to correspond to the hours of the day, and each *nūbah* was an hour long. Only eleven of those remain in the Moroccan tradition and thirteen in the Tunisian; they are now sung in shorter versions. Remnants of these nūbāt are found in the *maqāmāt*, or melodic modes—related to major and minor scales and their

The Fes Singers:
(Seated) Sidi Muhammad Bennis
(Standing, left to right) Sidi Driss Eddaoudi,
Sidi Tawfiq al-Noury, Sidi Abdellah El-Idrissi Filali

corresponding key signatures in Western music theory—that are used throughout Morocco. Their echoes can still be heard in the haunting sounds of the cante jondo (deep song) vocal style of flamenco music in Granada, where the Arabo-Andalusian tradition flourished and is still termed *al-Gharnāṭī* (referring to Granada) in Morocco.

The English musician and student of Moroccan music Abdal Latif Whiteman, who now resides in Spain, writes:

> A *maqām* (melodic note) defines the musical context of each musical section, and this is married to a very exact rhythmic mode (the *īqā*ʿ), which in turn is dictated by the meter of the Arabic poetry sung. The *naghamāt*, or tunes, within the maqām change and flow in a traditional form which has been unswervingly adhered to for many centuries and passed on orally from generation to generation. The *inshād*, or solo singing passages, are done to a very strict formula, although elaboration and decoration is individual. *Mawwāl*, another form of solo singing employed, is more of an extemporization but still within the discipline and style of the maqām.

This form of music remains alive and well throughout Morocco and much of North Africa. While much of it is a cappella and devotional, a secular version exists with full orchestral accompaniment. When the tradition's great master and Maghrebi rebab (a bowed lute) virtuoso of this genre, Abdelkrim Raïs, passed away in 1996 after heading the famous Arabo-Andalusian Orchestra of Fes for fifty years, flags flew at half-mast throughout Morocco in his honor.

This Arabo-Andalusian music tradition continues to be passed down through oral transmission in musical conservatories in Fes and other North African cities. Both the *Burdah* and the *Hamziyyah* or parts of them are sung in almost every devotional gathering of Morocco in which song is sung.

For the *Hamziyyah* recording of all 456 verses of the poem, the best and most euphonic sounds come from the Fes Singers, expertly led by Sidi Muhammad Bennis, one of Morocco's greatest living masters of the Andalusian and Moroccan a cappella tradition. Accompanied by the renowned singers—Sidi Tawfiq al-Noury, Sidi Abdellah El-Idrissi Filali, and Sidi Driss Eddaoudi—Sidi Muhammad recorded the *Hamziyyah* in multiple sittings over several days in 2014 in the blessed city of Fes, the Guarded, at Al-Jazuli Studios.

The final two-hour recording, skillfully mastered by Alex Greaves at Nave Studios in Leeds in the UK, delivers a landmark performance of immense spiritual intensity, displaying their rarefied mastery of the various melodies in this distinct orally transmitted musical tradition. Also featured in the recording is the world-renowned singing virtuoso Sidi Abdelfettah Bennis, who contributes several captivating solo performances.

This recording preserves for posterity the remarkable tradition of Morocco's great devotional singers, who not only memorize by rote all their contributions but who spiritually embody the poet's sentiments with their deep love of the Prophet ﷺ. Such commitment to the art requires many years of apprenticeship with masters in a living tradition, and success comes when one perseveres with steadfast devotion—indeed, art for God's sake.

In our world of instantaneous results, immediate gratification, and a paucity of patience, true practitioners who have a lucid inner state to express the harmonic outer art form are unfortunately uncommon. This tour de force of men who have spent a lifetime devoted to this art may, God willing, inspire and edify generations of believers yet to be born.

NOTE: The rendition by the Fes Singers includes a few extra lines and some variance in the declension of certain words compared to the recension used in the Arabic text for this translation. The recording can be accessed here: www.abuzahra.org/hamziyyah.

◆

APPENDICES

Spring's Gift

Hamza Yusuf

I envy the sand that met his feet
I'm jealous of honey he tasted sweet
Of birds that hovered above his head
Of spiders who spun their sacred web
To save him from his enemies
I envy clouds formed from the seas
That gave him cover from the heat
Of a sun whose light could not compete
With his, whose face did shine so bright
That all was clear in blinding night
I envy sightless trees that gazed
Upon his form completely dazed
Not knowing if the sun had risen
But felt themselves in unison
With those who prayed, and fasted too
Simply because he told them to
With truth and kindness, charity
From God who gave such clarity
His mercy comes in one He sent
To mold our hearts more heaven bent
I envy all there at his side
Who watched the turning of the tide
As truth prevailed and falsehood fled
And hope restored life to the dead
Men and Women through him found grace
To seek together God's noble face

I envy the cup that gave him drink
His thoughts that helped us all to think
To be one thought that passed his mind
Inspiring him to act so kind
For me this world is not one jot
If I could simply be a thought
From him to God throughout the ages
As revelation came in stages
I pity all who think it odd
To hear him say there is one God
Or he was sent by God to men
To hone their spirits' acumen
It's pride that blinds us from the sight
That helps good men to see his light
He taught us all to be God's slaves
And he will be the one who saves
Humanity from sinful pride
Muhammad has God on his side
So on this day be blessed and sing
For he was born to grace our Spring
With lilies, flowers, life's rebirth
In a dome of green like his on earth

◆

Be Like Ahmad ﷺ

Hamza Yusuf

The sun solemnly stated, “How can my light compare to his?”
And the moon laughed,
“Be like me, content to reveal another’s light.”
The North Star declared, “What guidance can I provide
Next to his?” and all the stars exclaimed, “Be like us who
Revolve around you and show no envy.”
The sea shouted, “What secrets can I contain
When compared to his wonders?”
The clouds pleaded, “Be like us,
Exalted in the sky because we humbly
Draw our water from another and pour forth
In gratitude and service.”
The rose ruefully remarked, “What beauty
Do I have next to his?”
The mirror said, “Be like me who can only reflect
Another’s beauty.”
Reason exclaimed, “What wisdom can I reveal
Next to his revelation?”
The tongue replied, “Be still and let me quote him.”
Gold complained, “What worth do I have next to his?”
Copper cried, “What ingratitude! Your purity
Was his from the start. Be happy to be compared to him.”
The dog barked, “He mentioned me.”
The cat meowed, “He petted me.”
The donkey brayed, “He rode on me!”
The horse neighed, “He called me an ocean.”

The camel grunted, "I took him to safety!"
The frog croaked, "I was his favorite."
The spider stood tall on eight and stately stated,
"I protected him once."
The cloud boasted, "I shaded him!"
The tree declared, "He called me, and I bowed to him."
The palm trunk said, "Well, he hugged me."
The date gloated, "I was sweet for him!"
Milk exulted, "I nourished him."
Water crowed, "I quenched his thirst."
The Kaaba shouted, "He circled me!"
The Yemeni corner replied, "He touched me."
The black stone laughed and said, "He kissed me."
The pebbles yelled, "We praised God in his palm."
The mountains of Mecca called out, "He loved us."
Medina demurely whispered, "He chose me."
And humanity cried, "Me, me."
And God said, "Be like Ahmad."
And Ahmad said, "My community, my community."
And God replied, "We will grant you until you are content."

◆

كُنْ كَأَحْمَدَ[1] ﷺ

قصيدة للشيخ حمزة يوسف (Be Like Ahmad ﷺ)

ترجمها بتصرّف حسن بوفارس

(بحر الخفيف)

* * *

قَالَتِ الشَّمْسُ فِي حَيَاءِ الْعَذَارِي   حِينَ مَدَّتْ ضِيَاءَهَا فِي الْبَرَارِي
هَذِهِ مُنْتَهَايَ، هَيْهَاتَ نُورِي   أَنْ يُوَازَى بِنُورِهِ أَوْ يُجَارِي!
ضَحِكَ الْبَدْرُ فِي سَمَاهُ مُجِيبًا   إِذْ تَجَلَّتْ أَنْوَارُهُ كَالنَّهَارِ:
لِتَكُونِي مِثْلِي إِذَا اقْبِسِي نُورًا   مِنْ سَنَاهُ يُهْدَى بِهِ كُلُّ سَارِي
تَمْتَمَتْ فِي السَّمَا "بَنَاتٌ لِنَعْشٍ":   كَيْفَ نَهْدِي كَهَدْيِهِ أَوْ نُبَارِي؟!
صَاحَتِ الْأَنْجُمُ الزَّوَاهِرُ: يَكْفِي   أَنْ نَطُوفَ بِالنُّورِ حَوْلَ الْمَدَارِ
هَدَرَ الْبَحْرُ: أَيُّ سِرٍّ خَفِيٍّ   أَحْتَوِي جَنْبَ سِرِّهِ أَوْ أُوَارِي
هُوَ بَحْرٌ مِنَ الْمَعَانِي حَوَى مِنْ   حِكْمَةِ الْوَحْيِ جَوْهَرَ الْأَسْرَارِ
خَاطَبَتْهُ الْغُيُومُ: يَا بَحْرُ كُنْ مِثْـ   ـلِيَ فِي الْأُفْقِ أَغْتَدِي كَالْجَوَارِي
أَرْشُفُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْكَ، أُزْجِيهِ شُكْرًا   دُونَ زَهْوٍ مِنِّي وَدُونَ اغْتِرَارِ

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[1] This is a translation with slight modification of Hamza Yusuf's poem above, "Be Like Ahmad." The translator, Dr. Hasan Boufares, is an accomplished Moroccan scholar and poet.

قَالَتِ الوَرْدَةُ الجَمِيلَةُ: مَا لِي   مِنْ جَمَالٍ بِجَنْبِهِ لَنْ أُمَارِي!
غَمَزَتْهَا المِرْآةُ: كُونِي كَحَالِي   تَعْكِسِينَ الجَمَالَ لِلْأَنْظَارِ
نَطَقَ العَقْلُ: حِكْمَتِي أَفْكَارِي   لَا تُوَازَى بِوَعْيِهِ المِدْرَارِ
فَأَجَابَ اللِّسَانُ: مَهْلاً وَدَعْنِي   أَقْتَبِسْ مِنْهُ حِكْمَتِي وَاعْتِبَارِي
وَاشْتَكَى التِّبْرُ: قِيمَتِي غَيْرُ شَيْءٍ   جَنْبَهُ، أَيُّ قِيمَةٍ لِلنُّضَارِ؟!
فَأَجَابَ النُّحَاسُ: أَيُّ جُحُودٍ   فِيمَ تَزْهُو بِهِ وَأَيُّ افْتِخَارِ؟!
هُوَ أَنْقَى فِي أَصْلِهِ لَمْ يُمَحَّصْ   لَا وَلَمْ يُكْوَ قَطْ بِلَذْعَةِ نَارِ
مَاءَتِ القِطَّةُ الأَلِيفَةُ: حَسْبِي   كَفُّهُ دَلَّلَتْ فَرْوِي بِوَقَارِ
صَهَلَ الصَّافِنُ الجَوَادُ: دَعَانِي الـ   ـفَخْرَ، أَنْعِمْ بِهِ كَوَصْفِ فَخَارِ
حَنَّتِ النَّاقَةُ الرَّؤُومُ: أَنَا كُنْـ   ـتُ أَمَاناً لَهُ مِنَ الأَخْطَارِ
قَالَتِ العَنْكَبُوتُ تَفْخَرُ: بَيْتِي   كَانَ حِصْناً لَهُ مِنَ الأَشْرَارِ
قَالَتِ السُّحْبُ: إِنَّهَا ظَلَّلَتْهُ   مِنْ هَجِيرِ النَّهَارِ فِي الأَسْفَارِ
فَأَجَابَتْ أَشْجَارُ: حِينَ دَعَانِي   جِئْتُ سَاجِدَةً بِمَحْضِ اخْتِيَارِي
قَالَ جِذْعٌ مِن نَخْلَةٍ ذَاتَ حُزْنٍ:   ضَمَّنِي يَوْمَ كَانَ ضَاقَ اصْطِبَارِي
قَالَتِ التَّمْرَةُ الشَّهِيَّةُ: كَمْ كُنْـ   ـتُ لَهُ لَذَّةً مِن بَيْنِ الثِّمَارِ
قَالَ زُبْدُ الحَلِيبِ: كُنْتُ غِذَاءً   طَيِّباً فِي سِفَارِهِ وَالقَرَارِ
قَالَتِ القِرْبَةُ المَلِيئَةُ مَاءً:   ارْتَوَى مِنْ عُلَالَتِي فِي السِّفَارِ
قَالَتِ الكَعْبَةُ العَتِيقَةُ: فِي طَا   فَ وَكَمْ ظَلَّ زِينَةً لِسِتَارِي

وَأَجَابَ الرُّكْنُ اليَمَانِيُّ: فَقَدْ لَا   مَسَّنِي جِسْمُهُ بِيَوْمِ المَزَارِ
ضَجَّ الحَجَرُ الكَرِيمُ: لَقَدْ قَبَّـ   لَنِي، مِنَّةٌ حَبَانِيَ البَارِي
قَالَتِ الحَصَيَاتُ: سَبَّحَتْ فِي رَا   حَتَيْهِ بِمَحَاسِنِ الأَذْكَارِ
مَكَّةٌ وَجِبَالُهَا الشُّمُّ نَادَتْ:   كَمْ أَحَبَّ مُقَامَهُ فِي جِوَارِي
هَمَسَتْ طَيْبَةٌ: قَدِ اخْتَارَ أَرْضِي   مَسْكَناً بَعْدَ هِجْرَةٍ لِدِيَارِي
صَاحَتِ النَّاسُ وَالبَرِيَّةُ جَمْعًا: نَفْسِي نَفْسِي نَفْسِي وَأَيْنَ فِرَارِي!
قَالَ رَبُّ الوُجُودِ: كُونُوا خِيَاراً   مِثْلَ أَحْمَدَ خِيرَةِ الأَخْيَارِ
قَالَ أَحْمَدُ: يَا إِلَهِي إِلَهِي   أُمَّتِي أُمَّتِي بِدَارِ القَرَارِ
وَأَجَابَ الكَرِيمُ جَلَّ عُلَاهُ   مِنَّةً لِنَبِيِّهِ المُخْتَارِ:
وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيهَا رَبُّهَا حَتَّى   تَرْتَوِي مِنْ رِضَاهُ فِي خَيْرِ دَارِ

The Ten Foundations

The savant Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Ṣabbān (d. 1207/1792)

Translated by Hamza Yusuf

المَبَادِئُ العَشَرَةُ

العَلَّامَةُ مُحَمَّدُ بنُ عَلِيٍّ الصَّبَّانُ

إِنَّ مَبَادِي كُلِّ فَنٍّ عَشَرَه   الحَدُّ وَالمَوْضُوعُ ثُمَّ الثَّمَرَه
وَفَضْلُهُ وَنِسْبَةٌ وَالوَاضِع   وَالإِسْمُ الإِسْتِمْدَادُ حُكْمُ الشَّارِع
مَسَائِلُ وَالبَعْضُ بِالبَعْضِ اكْتَفَى   وَمَنْ دَرَى الجَمِيعَ حَازَ الشَّرَفَا

Each science contains these ten elements:
Its essence, the subject, and benefits,

Its virtue, relations, and source,
Its name, whence it draws, legal force;

Add topics, then all is sufficient.
High honor is gained when proficient.

The Ten Foundations of *Sīrah*

SINCE IT FIRST APPEARED, HUNDREDS of years ago, the *Hamziyyah* has resonated within the hearts of lovers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It has also inspired great scholars of Islam to grace it with their commentaries, ranging from the pithy to the prolix. Their manifold efforts to clarify any recondite aspects of the poem and expand on its biographical elements indicate their immense esteem for the *Hamziyyah*. Given the substantial amount of the Prophet's biography that this epic poem covers, many have studied it and continue to do so not only for its literary merits but also as a work of *sīrah* (prophetic biography).

In the classic Islamic tradition, scholars always began their works, regardless of the subject matter, with the Ten Foundations (*al-mabādi' al-'asharah*), which serve as a point of departure for a given subject—a vision of the forest before the trees. The most important of the Ten Foundations, the one essential for understanding why one studies the subject, is obviously its "fruit," or benefit—in the case of *sīrah*, the benefit results from reciting, hearing, or studying the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The Foundations facilitate better comprehension of the matter at hand by delineating its most elemental concepts at the outset, including its definition, its benefit, whence it derives its meanings, and its founder. Hence, I have briefly recounted below the Ten Foundations of the subject of sīrah.

1. Definition (*al-Ḥadd*)

Linguistically, the Arabic word *sīrah* derives from the verb *sāra*. According to the renowned German Arabist Hans Wehr, *sīrah* denotes many meanings, including "way of walking; march; way of acting, conduct of life; reputation, fame; course of life; biography; tale (about a person's deeds or life); heroic deeds, war-like episodes, campaigns; the biography of Mohammed." Similarly, Edward William Lane, in his *Arabic-English Lexicon*, gives the following meanings: "a way, a course, rule, mode, or manner, of acting or conduct or life or the like; synonymous with path (*ṭarīqah*) and the prophetic way (*sunnah*)."

The word *sīrah* occurs once in the Qur'an, in Sura Ṭāhā: "We will restore it to its original mode (sīrah)" (20:21). Imam al-Maḥallī explains that in this verse, *sīrah* means "state"; hence, the restoration is to its "original state of being" (*ḥālatuhā al-ūlā*).

As a technical term, scholars define *sīrah* as "a study of the Prophet's life." Thus, it is simply "prophetic biography," with the genus being "biography" and the differentia being "of the Prophet ﷺ."

2. Subject (*al-Mawḍūʿ*)

According to the Moroccan scholar al-Ṭālib al-Ḥājj, the subject of sīrah revolves around the essence (*dhāt*) of the Prophet ﷺ. This covers all matters related to his person and life: his lineage, childhood, manhood, work, revelation, mission, hegira, statesmanship, battles and expeditions (*ʿilm al-maghāzī*), as well as physical attributes and character (*ʿilm al-shamāʾil*). Scholars consider these last two—military exploits and character—as distinct sciences, though they are also subsumed within the sīrah. In addition, scholars sometimes refer to the subject as *ʿilm al-siyar*, from the plural of sīrah, which refers to the general history of any matters related to the Prophet ﷺ, such as the Arabs as a people, the Arabian Peninsula, the various tribes involved in the Prophet's life and teachings, the city of Mecca, and the building of the Kaaba; *ʿilm al-siyar* also includes events that occurred after the Prophet's death related to his legacy, such as the histories of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidūn*), who succeeded him both spiritually and politically, and the states they led.

3. Benefit (*al-Thamarah*)

Of the many profound benefits that come from studying the Prophet's life, the greatest is the love and esteem for him that grow in the hearts of those who study sīrah. Significant benefits and blessings of studying sīrah also include a richer understanding of the Qur'an and sunnah, which form the foundation of all Islamic knowledge. Other benefits involve the solace and gratitude derived from knowing that even though God extols the Prophet ﷺ as God's beloved, nonetheless, the Beloved's life was filled with trials and tribulations that make our own seem inconsequential. Imam al-Ṭālib al-Ḥājj elucidates the myriad benefits of studying sīrah and why love for the Prophet ﷺ "is a condition of sound faith." He writes,

> As for its benefits, among them are the following: it guides a wayfarer desirous of a sound spiritual path (*sulūk*) to knowledge of God (*ma'rifah*). Moreover, its study reveals the secret of the Prophet's essential humanity that inspires other human beings to realize that they too can follow his practice, both inwardly and outwardly, in norms and in devotions. Knowledge of sīrah also fills the hearts with awe of the Prophet ﷺ, due to one being exposed to his form, character, and beautiful deeds, not to mention the exalted position he holds with his Lord. That magnification, in turn, results in one's exalting his teachings [shariah], both its foundations and its branches. This further incentivizes one to act in accordance with it and prefer it over what the ego desires; in other words, that will inevitably engender a severance from worldly objects and connect one to the Lord of objects, who created the human being and made him for that singular purpose. All of that derives from the Prophet's exalted station, illustrated throughout the Perfect Reminder [the Qur'an].
>
> One also attains from the study of sīrah knowledge of how to rise spiritually on the two rungs of patience and gratitude to finally arrive to the Holy Presence (*ḥaḍrat al-qudus*). The latter results from learning of the many trials that the Prophet's Lord disciplined him with and the beautiful patience the Prophet ﷺ displayed throughout, in all the places of hardship where worldly help to which he could cling was not forthcoming. The immense patience and gratitude he displayed, irrespective of the circumstances, cannot be overstated. The forbearance he showed during the afflictions and assaults of the polytheists from the outset of his mission, after his hegira, and until

his resting place in his Rawḍah resulted in all the benefits he accrued from God. May God bless and grant him peace.

Another benefit of studying sīrah derives from learning about the Prophet's beautiful qualities (*al-ḥusn*) and his virtuous acts of excellence (*iḥsān*). Indeed, both are means to achieving a strong love for him, given that a lover derives his love from either attraction to beauty or from receiving another's largesse, which engenders love of the benefactor; the many ways love occurs can be reduced to two, beauty and bounty (*al-ḥusn wa al-iḥsān*), as it is human nature to love beauty and to love those who shower us with goodness. And no beauty and no bounty equal that of the Prophet ﷺ.

Another benefit of studying sīrah lies in attaining sound faith. Indeed, love for the Prophet ﷺ is a condition of sound faith, as one's faith cannot be complete without sincere love of the Prophet ﷺ. Furthermore, loving the Prophet ﷺ repels the hellfire from one's fate in the afterlife. Abū Nu'aym ؓ relates that a man said to Ibn 'Umar ؓ, "I wish I had seen the Prophet." Ibn 'Umar ؓ replied, "What would you have done?" The man responded, "I would have immediately recognized his prophethood and kissed his forehead." Ibn 'Umar ؓ then said, "Would you like to hear some good news?" The man replied, "Of course." Ibn 'Umar ؓ stated, "I heard the Prophet ﷺ say, 'Love for me does not commingle with anyone's heart except that it results in God prohibiting the flames of hell from ever touching his body.'"

Based on a verse in Sura al-Nisā' as well as a hadith, one who loves the Prophet ﷺ also gains the company of the Prophet ﷺ in the afterlife. The verse states, "Whoever obeys God and God's Messenger will be admitted to gardens below which rivers flow, wherein they will abide" (4:13). As for the hadith, Imams al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and al-Tirmidhī relate that the Prophet ﷺ said, "A man will be with whom he loves" (*al-mar' ma'a man aḥabb*).

A major sign that one is loved by God is that one has love for the Prophet ﷺ. A group of men came to the Prophet ﷺ and said, "We love God." In response, the following verse was revealed in Sura Āl 'Imrān: "Say, 'If you love God, then follow me; God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is most forgiving, most merciful'" (3:31). Thus, in the end, the matter of salvation lies less in loving God and more in being loved by God. And following the Prophet ﷺ incentivized by love for him secures God's love for the one who does so.

Finally, the last benefit is the fruit of the previous benefits, which is the ability to visualize the Prophet's noble form and brilliant countenance. This results from the accepted notion that anyone who has an immense desire for something will visualize it often. This can even induce one to imagine it in front of one, given that spiritual connection often results in an imagined physical phenomenon. This will help one to see the Prophet ﷺ while one is asleep and eventually in a waking state. The secrets and illuminations that occur to one who, because of intense meditation, witnesses the Prophet ﷺ are of an ineffable quality.

4. Virtue (*al-Faḍl*)

The virtue of anything directly relates to that with which it is associated. Hence, sīrah offers the highest virtue due to its relationship with God's beloved ﷺ.

5. Relationship to Other Sciences (*Nisbah*)

This science ranks among the "sacred sciences" (*al-ʿulūm al-sharʿiyyah*), as it directly relates to the Qur'an and the hadith as well as the historical events relayed in both, along with the narrations (*al-akhbār*) reported by the Prophet's companions. However, sīrah also remains a distinct science among the sciences of Islam.

6. Founder (*al-Wāḍiʿ*)

The Prophet's companions knew his biography from living with him and witnessing his sublime states and the many wondrous and miraculous events of his life. They also conferred with one another, seeking to learn all they could about the Prophet ﷺ from each other. They shared their knowledge and observations with the generation that followed them (*tābiʿūn*), who in turn shared it with their followers, until all of the events and narrations were documented.

The first complete work on the qualities (*shamāʾil*) of the Prophet ﷺ that has been maintained by scholars through unbroken chains until today is the renowned *Al-Shamāʾil al-Muḥammadiyyah* by Imam Abū ʿĪsā Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā b. Sawrah al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892). Imam Muḥammad b. Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/746) was among the first to record the battles and expeditions. Ibn Kathīr mentions in his *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, "The first to write a sīrah was Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yasār who died in Baghdad in 151/768."

However, evidence exists that biographies were written decades earlier by 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/714), Shuraḥbīl b. Sa'd Abū Sa'd al-Madanī (d. 123/745), and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/746). None of their works has survived except in the form of quotes in others' works. Ibn Isḥāq's work, however, stands out as the primary source of all subsequent biographies. It was abridged and edited by the Abbasid historian and scholar Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām b. Ayyūb al-Ḥimyarī (d. 218/833), who was a student of Ibn Isḥāq's student Ziyād al-Bakkā'ī (d. 183/799). Ibn Hishām edited Ibn Isḥāq's original *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, removing certain narrations he deemed unacceptable and poetry he deemed forged. Ibn Isḥāq's original complete work exists only in recensions produced by later editors.

7. Name (*al-Ism*)

Its names include *'ilm al-maghāzī wa al-siyar*, *'ilm al-sīrah*, and *'ilm al-siyar*; the military events are singularly called *'ilm al-maghāzī*, and the Prophet's ethos and qualities are referred to as *al-shamā'il*. Abū al-Fatḥ b. Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734/1334) named his sīrah using all three: *'Uyūn al-athar fī funūn al-maghāzī wa al-shamā'il wa al-siyar*.

8. Sources (*al-Istimdād*)

The fundamental sources of this science are the historically transmitted recensions of the Qur'an and the hadith, in addition to the narrations from the companions and the generation that followed them. The historians were far less rigorous than the jurists and the traditionalists in their compilations, and many narrations that are considered weak and even those without chains of transmission were collected in the biographical literature. This was not deemed problematic by the early community. The recent biography entitled *Al-Raḥīq al-makhtūm* by Ṣafī al-Raḥmān al-Mubārakfūrī attempted to rely upon only the Qur'an and authentic or well-founded narrations.

9. Legal Category (*al-Ḥukm al-Sharʿī*)

The scholars of shariah ranked the knowledge of sīrah among the recommended (*mandūb*) sciences of Islam. However, scholars among the folk (*al-qawm*) considered this knowledge to be of the utmost importance, as it engenders love for the Prophet ﷺ in the hearts of the believers, which then results in God's love of the servant. Scholars found a proof for its study in the Qur'anic verse "Remind them of the Days of God" (14:5), given that "Days of God" is understood by commentators to include the blessings of God, especially the victories that God bestowed upon the prophets in their struggles with disbelievers. Among the greatest of God's blessings remains the guidance granted to us by the Messenger of God ﷺ through the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of his life.

10. Topics (*Masā'il*)

The many topics that fall under the rubric of sīrah include the history of the Arabian Peninsula, the Arab tribes, the lineage of the Prophet ﷺ, his parents, Āminah's pregnancy, the Prophet's childhood, his early journey to Syria, his role in the Vile War (*ḥarb al-fijār*), his marriage to Khadījah ﵂, his meditation in the cave of Ḥirā', his receiving of revelation, his first three years of covert preaching, the response of the Qurayshī clans, his persecution, the two hegiras to Africa, the boycott of Banū Hāshim, his trip to Ṭā'if, the assassination attempts on him, his Night Journey (*isrā'*) and his heavenly ascent (*miʿrāj*), his hegira to Medina, his early struggles in Medina, the Jewish intrigues, the battles of Badr and Uḥud, the other major battles, his trials with the hypocrites, the Slanderous Incident (*ḥadīth al-ifk*), the first attempt at ʿ*umrah* (Ḥudaybiyah), the delegations, his marches on Mecca and Ṭā'if, his final pilgrimage, and his death and burial ﷺ.

* * *

Transliteration Key

CONSONANTS

ء	ʼ	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	ʻ	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	ه	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

VOWELS

Short vowels:	ـَ	a	ـُ	u	ـِ	i
Long vowels:	ـا	ā	ـُو	ū	ـِي	ī
Dipthongs:	ـَو	aw	ـَي	ay		

The definite article is rendered *al-* to preserve the representation of the Arabic script as written, not as pronounced, except where fully inflected expressions are quoted as such. Therefore, *ash-shams* is rendered *al-shams*, unless it appears in a fully inflected verbal expression, such as *wa sh-shamsi wa ḍuḥāhā*. Without inflection, this written expression is rendered *wa al-shams wa ḍuḥāhā*.

The *tā' marbūṭah* is represented by a final *h*, unless it ends the first term of an *iḍāfah* construction, as in *laylat al-qadr*. Note that the *tā' marbūṭah* in *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*, for instance, is represented as an *h* because it is not the first term of an *iḍāfah* construction.

Words that have entered the English language, such as "hadith," "fatwa," and "imam," are not transliterated or italicized unless rendered in formulaic Arabic expressions or idiomatic phrases.

ﷺ An invocation of God's blessings and peace upon the Prophet Muhammad: "May God's blessings and peace be upon him."

﵇ An invocation of God's peace upon a prophet or angel: "May peace be upon him."

﵉ An invocation of God's peace upon two prophets: "May peace be upon them."

﵈ An invocation of God's peace upon three or more prophets: "May peace be upon them."

﵁ An invocation of God's contentment with a male companion of the Prophet: "May God be pleased with him."

﵂ An invocation of God's contentment with a female companion of the Prophet: "May God be pleased with her."

﵄ An invocation of God's contentment with two companions of the Prophet: "May God be pleased with them."

﵃ An invocation of God's contentment with three or more companions of the Prophet: "May God be pleased with them."

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THE NOBLE PROPHETIC LINEAGE

عَبْدُ الله	‘Abd Allāh
شَيْبَة (عَبْدُ المُطَّلِب)	Shaybah (‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib)
هَاشِم	Hāshim
عَبْدُ مَنَاف	‘Abd Manāf
قُصَيّ	Quṣayy
كِلَاب	Kilāb
مُرَّة	Murrah
كَعْب	Ka‘b
لُؤَيّ	Lu’ayy
غَالِب	Ghālib
فِهْر	Fihr
مَالِك	Mālik
النَّضْر	Al-Naḍr
كِنَانَة	Kinānah
خُزَيْمَة	Khuzaymah
مُدْرِكَة	Mudrikah
إِلْيَاس	Ilyās
مُضَر	Muḍar
نِزَار	Nizār
مَعَدّ	Ma‘add
عَدْنَان	‘Adnān
[أربعون أبًا]	[Forty forefathers]
النَّبِيُّ إِسْمَاعِيل عليه السلام	The Prophet Ismā‘īl عليه السلام
النَّبِيُّ إِبْرَاهِيم عليه السلام	The Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

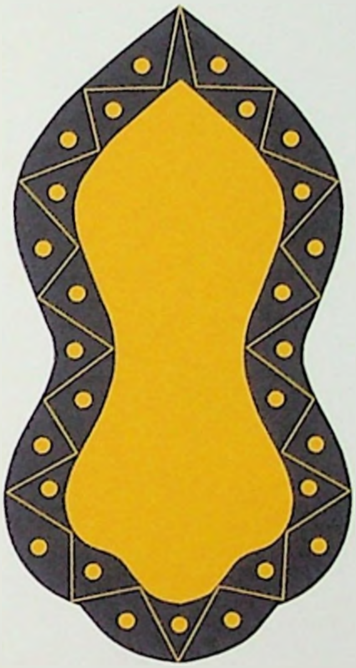
وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

AND YOU DO INDEED HAVE A STRONG CHARACTER.

[68:4]

THE NOBLE SANDAL

عَلَى رَأْسِ هَذَا الكَوْنِ نَعْلُ مُحَمَّدٍ   عَلَتْ فَجَمِيعُ الخَلْقِ تَحْتَ ظِلَالِهِ
لَدَى الطُّورِ مُوسَى نُودِيَ اخْلَعْ وَأَحْمَدٌ   عَلَى القُرْبِ لَمْ يُؤْمَرْ بِخَلْعِ نِعَالِهِ



Above the cosmos' crown, Muhammad's sandal rose,
With all creation in its shaded grace.

In Tuwa's valley, Moses heard, "Remove your sandals,"
Yet Ahmad, from on high, left his sandals in their place.